A

PRACTICAL VIEW,

&c. &c.

BRITISH MUSEUM
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A

PRACTICAL VIEW

OF THE

PREVAILING RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

OF

PROFESSED CHRISTIANS,

IN THE

HIGHER AND MIDDLE CLASSES

IN THIS

COUNTRY,

CONTRASTED WITH

REAL CHRISTIANITY.

By WILLIAM WILBERFORCE, Esq;

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR THE COUNTY OF YORK.

Search the Scriptures!—— JOHN, v. 39.

How charming is DIVINE PHILOSOPHY!
Not harsh, and crabbed, as dull Fools suppose,
But Musical as is Apollo's lute,
And a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns. MILTON.

DUBLIN:

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INTRODUCTION.

IT has been, for ſeveral years, the earneſt wiſh of the writer of the following pages to addreſs his countrymen on the important ſubject of Religion; but the various duties of his public ſtation, and a conſtitution incapable of much labour, have obſtructed the execution of his purpoſe. Long has he been looking forward to ſome vacant ſeaſon, in which he might devote his whole time and attention to this intereſting ſervice, free from the interruption of all other concerns; and he has the rather wiſhed for this opportunity of undiſtracted and mature reflection, from a de-

ſire that what he might ſend into the world might thus be rendered leſs undeſerving of the public eye. Meanwhile life is wearing away, and he daily becomes more and more convinced, that he might wait in vain for this ſeaſon of complete vacancy. He muſt, therefore, improve ſuch occaſional intervals of leiſure as may occur to him in the courſe of a buſy life, and throw himſelf on the Reader's indulgence for the pardon of ſuch imperfections, as the opportunity of undiverted and more mature attention might have enabled him to diſcover and correct.

But the plea here ſuggeſted is by no means intended as an excuſe for the opinions which he ſhall expreſs, if they be found miſtaken. Here, if he be in an error, it is however a deliberate error. He would indeed account himſelf unpardonable, if he were to intrude his firſt thoughts upon the Public on a queſtion of ſuch importance; and he can truly declare, that what he ſhall offer will be the reſult

ſult of much reading, obſervation, and inquiry, and of long, ſerious, and repeated conſideration.

It is not improbable that he may be accuſed of deviating from his proper line, and of impertinently interfering in the concerns of a Profeſſion to which he does not belong. If it were neceſſary, however, to defend himſelf againſt this charge, he might ſhelter himſelf under the authority of many moſt reſpectable examples. But ſurely to ſuch an accuſation it may be ſufficient to reply, that it is the duty of every man to promote the happineſs of his fellow-creatures to the utmoſt of his power; and that he who thinks he ſees many around him, whom he eſteems and loves, labouring under a fatal error, muſt have a cold heart, or a moſt confined notion of benevolence, if he could refrain from endeavouring to ſet them right, leſt in ſo doing he ſhould be accuſed of ſtepping out of his proper walk, and expoſe himſelf on that ground to the imputation of officiouſneſs.

But

But he might alſo allege as a full juſtification, not only that Religion is the buſineſs of every one, but that its advancement or decline in any country is ſo intimately connected with the temporal intereſts of ſociety, as to render it the peculiar concern of a political man; and that what he may preſume to offer on the ſubject of Religion may perhaps be peruſed with leſs jealouſy and more candour, from the very circumſtance of its having been written by a Layman, which muſt at leaſt exclude the idea (an idea ſometimes illiberally ſuggeſted to take off the effect of the works of Eccleſiaſtics) that it is prompted by motives of ſelf-intereſt, or of profeſſional prejudice.

But if the writer's apology be not found in the work itſelf, and in his avowed motive for undertaking it, he would in vain endeavour to ſatisfy his readers by any excuſes he might aſſign; therefore, without farther preamble, he will proceed to the

ſtatement

ſtatement and execution of his purpoſe.

The main object which he has in view is, not to convince the Sceptic, or to anſwer the arguments of perſons who avowedly oppoſe the fundamental doctrines of our Religion; but to point out the ſcanty and erroneous ſyſtem of the bulk of thoſe who belong to the claſs of orthodox Chriſtians, and to contraſt their defective ſcheme with a repreſentation of what the author apprehends to be real Chriſtianity. Often has it filled him with deep concern, to obſerve in this deſcription of perſons, ſcarcely any diſtinct knowledge of the real nature and principles of the religion which they profeſs. The ſubject is of infinite importance; let it not be driven out of our minds by the buſtle or diſſipations of life. This preſent ſcene, and all its cares and all its gaieties, will ſoon be rolled away, and "we muſt ſtand before the judgment "ſeat of Chriſt." This awful conſideration will prompt the writer to expreſs

preſs himſelf with greater freedom than he ſhould otherwiſe be diſpoſed to uſe. This conſideration he truſts, alſo, will juſtify his frankneſs, and will ſecure him a ſerious and patient peruſal. But it would be treſpaſſing on the indulgence of the reader to detain him with introductory remarks. Let it only be farther premiſed, that if what ſhall be ſtated ſhould to any appear needleſsly auſtere and rigid, the writer muſt lay in his claim not to be condemned, without a fair inquiry whether or not his ſtatements accord with the language of the ſacred writings. To that teſt he refers with confidence; and it muſt be conceded by thoſe who admit the authority of Scripture (ſuch only he is addreſſing) that from the deciſion of the word of God there can be no appeal.

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A

PRACTICAL VIEW, &c.

CHAPTER I.

INADEQUATE CONCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY.

Popular Notions.—Scripture Account.—Ignorance in this Caſe criminal.—Two falſe Maxims expoſed.

BEFORE we proceed to the conſideration of any particular defects in the religious ſyſtem of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians, it may be proper to point out the very inadequate conception which they entertain of the importance of Chriſtianity in general, of its peculiar nature, and ſuperior excellence. If we liſten to their converſation, virtue is praiſed, and vice is cenſured; piety is perhaps applauded, and profaneneſs condemned. So far all is well. But let any one, who would not be deceived, by theſe "barren generalities" examine a little more cloſely, and he will find, that not to Chriſtianity in particular, but at beſt to Religion in general, perhaps to mere Morality, their homage is intended to be paid. With Chriſtianity, as diſtinct from

 theſe,

theſe, they are little acquainted; their views of it have been ſo curſory and ſuperficial, that far from diſcerning its characteriſtic eſſence, they have little more than perceived thoſe exterior circumſtances which diſtinguiſh it from other forms of Religion. There are ſome few facts, and perhaps ſome leading doctrines and principles, of which they cannot be wholly ignorant; but of the conſequences, and relations, and practical uſes of theſe, they have few ideas, or none at all.

Does this ſeem too ſtrong? View their plan of life and their ordinary conduct; and not to ſpeak at preſent of their general inattention to things of a religious nature, let us aſk, wherein can we diſcern the points of diſcrimination between them and profeſſed unbelievers? In an age wherein it is confeſſed and lamented that infidelity abounds, do we obſerve in them any remarkable care to inſtruct their children in the principles of the faith which they profeſs, and to furniſh them with arguments for the defence of it? They would bluſh, on their child's coming out into the world, to think him defective in any branch of that knowledge, or of thoſe accompliſhments which belong to his ſtation in life, and accordingly theſe are cultivated with becoming aſſiduity. But he is left to collect his religion as he may; the ſtudy of Chriſtianity has formed no part of his education, and his attachment to it (where any attachment to it exiſts at all) is, too often, not the preference of ſober reaſon, but merely the reſult of early prejudice and groundleſs prepoſſeſſion. He was born in a Chriſtian country, of courſe he is a Chriſtian; his father was a member of the church of England, ſo is he. When ſuch

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ſuch is the hereditary religion handed down from generation to generation, it cannot ſurpriſe us to obſerve young men of ſenſe and ſpirit beginning to doubt altogether of the truth of the ſyſtem in which they have been brought up, and ready to abandon a ſtation which they are unable to defend. Knowing Chriſtianity chiefly in the difficulties which it contains, and in the impoſſibilities which are falſely imputed to it, they fall perhaps into the company of infidels; and, as might be expected, they are ſhaken by frivolous objections and profane cavils, which, had they been grounded and bottomed in reaſon and argument, would have paſſed by them, "as the idle wind," and ſcarcely have ſeemed worthy of ſerious notice.

Let us beware before it be too late. No one can ſay into what diſcredit Chriſtianity may hereby grow, at a time when the free and unreſtrained intercourſe, ſubſiſting amongſt the ſeveral ranks and claſſes of ſociety, ſo much favours the general diffuſion of the ſentiments of the higher orders. To a ſimilar ignorance is perhaps in no ſmall degree to be aſcribed the ſucceſs, with which Chriſtianity has been attacked of late years in a neighbouring country. Had ſhe not been wholly unarmed for the conteſt, however ſhe might have been forced from her untenable poſts, and compelled to diſembarraſs herſelf from her load of incumbrances, ſhe never could have been driven altogether out of the field by her puny aſſailants, with all their cavils, and gibes, and ſarcaſms; for in theſe conſiſted the main ſtrength of their petty artillery. Let us beware, leſt we alſo ſuffer from a like cauſe; nor let it be our crime and our reproach, that in ſchools, perhaps even in

Colleges, Chriſtianity is almoſt if not altogether neglected.

It cannot be expected, that they who are ſo little attentive to this great object in the education of their children, ſhould be more ſo in other parts of their conduct, where leſs ſtrongly ſtimulated by affection, and leſs obviouſly loaded with reſponſibility. They are of courſe therefore, little regardful of the ſtate of Chriſtianity in their own country; and ſtill more indifferent about communicating the light of divine truth to the nations which "ſtill ſit in darkneſs."

But Religion, it may be replied, is not noiſy and oſtentatious; it is modeſt and private in its nature; it reſides in a man's own boſom, and ſhuns the obſervation of the multitude. Be it ſo.

From the tranſient and diſtant view then, which we have been taking of theſe unaſſuming Chriſtians, let us approach a little nearer, and liſten to the unreſerved converſation of their confidential hours. Here, if any where, the interior of the heart is laid open, and we may aſcertain the true principles of their regards and averſions; the ſcale by which they meaſure the good and evil of life. Here, however, you will diſcover few or no traces of Chriſtianity. She ſcarcely finds herſelf a place amidſt the many objects of their hopes, and fears, and joys, and ſorrows. Grateful, perhaps, (as well indeed they may be grateful) for health, and talents, and affluence, and other bleſſings belonging to their perſons and conditions in life, they ſcarcely reckon in the number this grand diſtinguiſhing mark of the bounty of Providence; or if they mention it at all, it is noticed coldly and formally, like one of thoſe obſolete claims

to

to which, though but of ſmall account in the eſtimate of our wealth or power, we think it as well to put in our title from conſiderations of family decorum or of national uſage.

But what more than all the reſt eſtabliſhes the point in queſtion: let their converſation take a graver turn: here at length their religion, modeſt and retired as it is, muſt be expected to diſcloſe itſelf; here however you will look in vain for the religion of Jeſus. Their ſtandard of right and wrong is not the ſtandard of the goſpel: they approve and condemn by a different rule; they advance principles and maintain opinions altogether oppoſite to the genius and character of Chriſtianity. You would fancy yourſelf rather amongſt the followers of the old philoſophy; nor is it eaſy to gueſs how any one could ſatisfy himſelf to the contrary, unleſs, by mentioning the name of ſome acknowledged heretic, he ſhould afford them an occaſion of demonſtrating their zeal for the religion of their country.

The truth is, their opinions on theſe ſubjects are not formed from the peruſal of the word of God. The Bible lies on the ſhelf unopened; and they would be wholly ignorant of its contents, except for what they hear occaſionally at church, or for the faint traces which their memories may ſtill retain of the leſſons of their earlieſt infancy.

How different, nay, in many reſpects, how contradictory, would be the two ſyſtems of mere morals, of which the one ſhould be formed from the commonly received maxims of the Chriſtian world, and the other from the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures! it would be curious to remark in any one, who had hitherto ſatisfied himſelf with

with the former, the aſtoniſhment which would be excited on his firſt introduction to the latter. We are not left here to bare conjecture. This was, in fact, the effect produced on the mind of a late ingenious writer *, of whoſe little work, though it bears perhaps ſome marks of his cuſtomary love of paradox, we muſt at leaſt confeſs, that it expoſes, in a ſtrong point of view, the *poverty* of that ſuperficial religion which has been above condemned; and that it every where diſplays that happy perſpicuity, and grace, which ſo eminently characterize all the compoſitions of its author. But after this willing tribute of commendation, we are reluctantly compelled to remark, that the work in queſtion diſcredits the cauſe which it was meant to ſerve, by many crude and extravagant poſitions; from which no one can be ſecure who forms a haſty judgment of a deep and comprehenſive ſubject, the ſeveral bearings and relations of which have been imperfectly ſurveyed; and above all, it muſt be lamented, that it treats the great queſtion which it profeſſes to diſcuſs, rather as a matter of mere ſpeculation, than as one wherein our everlaſting intereſts are involved. Surely the writer's object ſhould have been, to convince his readers of their guilt ſtill more than of their ignorance, and to leave them impreſſed rather with a ſenſe of their danger than of their folly.

It were almoſt a waſte of time to multiply arguments in order to prove how criminal the voluntary ignorance, of which we have been ſpeaking, muſt appear in the ſight of God. It muſt be confeſſed by all who believe that we are accountable creatures, and to ſuch only the writer

* It is almoſt ſuperfluous to name Mr. Soame Jenyns.

is addreſſing himſelf, that we ſhall have to anſwer hereafter to the Almighty for all the means and occaſions we have here enjoyed of improving ourſelves, or of promoting the happineſs of others. And if, when ſummoned to give an account of our ſtewardſhip, we ſhall be called upon to anſwer for the uſe which we have made of our bodily organs, and of the means of relieving the wants and neceſſities of our fellow creatures; how much more for the exerciſe of the nobler and more exalted faculties of our nature, of invention, and judgment, and memory; and for our employment of all the inſtruments and opportunities of diligent application, and ſerious reflection, and honeſt deciſion. And to what ſubject might we in all reaſon be expected to apply more earneſtly, than to that wherein our eternal intereſts are at iſſue? When God has of his goodneſs vouchſafed to grant us ſuch abundant means of inſtruction in that which we are moſt concerned to know, how great muſt be the guilt, and how aweful the puniſhment of voluntary ignorance!

And why, it may be aſked, are we in this purſuit alone to expect knowledge without inquiry, and ſucceſs without endeavour? The whole analogy of nature inculcates on us a different leſſon, and our own judgments in matters of temporal intereſts and worldly policy confirm the truth of her ſuggeſtions. Bountiful as is the hand of Providence, its gifts are not ſo beſtowed as to ſeduce us into indolence, but to rouſe us to exertion; and no one expects to attain to the height of learning, or arts, or power, or wealth, or military glory, without vigorous reſolution, and ſtrenuous diligence, and ſteady perſeverance. Yet we expect to be Chriſtians

tians without labour, ſtudy, or inquiry. This is the more prepoſterous, becauſe Chriſtianity, being a revelation from God, and not the invention of man, diſcovering to us new relations, with their correſpondent duties; containing alſo doctrines, and motives, and practical principles, and rules, peculiar to itſelf, and almoſt as new in their nature as ſupreme in their excellence, we cannot reaſonably expect to become proficients in it by the accidental intercourſes of life, as one might learn inſenſibly the maxims of worldly policy, or a ſcheme of mere morals.

The diligent peruſal of the Holy Scriptures would diſcover to us our paſt ignorance. We ſhould ceaſe to be deceived by ſuperficial appearances, and to confound the Goſpel of Chriſt with the ſyſtems of philoſophers; we ſhould become impreſſed with that weighty truth, ſo much forgotten, and never to be too ſtrongly inſiſted on, that Chriſtianity calls on us, as we value our immortal ſouls, not merely in *general*, to be *religious* and *moral*, but *ſpecially* to believe the doctrines, and imbibe the principles, and practiſe the precepts of Chriſt. It might be to run into too great length to confirm this poſition beyond diſpute by expreſs quotations from Scripture. And (not to anticipate what belongs more properly to a ſubſequent part of the work) it may be ſufficient here to remark in general, that Chriſtianity is always repreſented in Scripture as the grand, the unparalleled inſtance of God's bounty to mankind. It was graciouſly held forth in the original promiſe to our firſt parents; it was predicted by a long continued ſeries of prophets; the ſubject of their prayers, inquiries, and longing expectations. In a world, which oppoſed and perſecuted them, it was their

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ſource of peace, and hope, and conſolation. At length it approached—the Deſire of all Nations—The long expected Star announced its preſence—A multitude of the heavenly hoſt hailed its introduction, and proclaimed its character; "Glory to God in the higheſt, on earth peace, "good will towards men." It is every where repreſented in ſcripture by ſuch figures as may moſt deeply impreſs on us a ſenſe of its value; it is ſpoken of as light from darkneſs, as releaſe from priſon, as deliverance from captivity, as life from death. "Lord, now letteſt thou thy "ſervant depart in peace, for mine eyes have "ſeen thy ſalvation," was the exclamation with which it was welcomed by the pious Simeon; and it was univerſally received and profeſſed among the early converts with thankfulneſs and joy. At one time, the communication of it is promiſed as a reward; at another, the loſs of it is threatened as a puniſhment. And, ſhort as is the form of prayer taught us by our bleſſed Saviour, the more general extenſion of the kingdom of Chriſt conſtitutes one of its leading petitions.

With what exalted conceptions of the importance of Chriſtianity ought we to be filled by ſuch deſcriptions as theſe? Yet, in vain have we "line upon line and precept upon precept." —Thus predicted, thus prayed and longed for, thus announced and characterized and rejoiced in, this heavenly treaſure poured into our lap in rich abundance we ſcarce accept. We turn from it coldly, or at beſt poſſeſs it negligently, as a thing of no account or eſtimation. But a due ſenſe of its value would be aſſuredly impreſſed on us by the diligent ſtudy of the word of God, that bleſſed repoſitory of divine truth

and conſolation. Thence it is that we are to learn our obligations and our duty, what we are to believe and what to practiſe. And, ſurely, one would think it could not be required to preſs men to the peruſal of the ſacred volume. Reaſon dictates, Revelation commands; "Faith "comes by hearing, and hearing by the word "of God."—"Search the Scriptures,"—"Be "ready to give to every one a reaſon of the "hope that is in you." Such are the declarations and injunctions of the inſpired writers; injunctions confirmed by commendations of thoſe who obey the admonition. Yet, is it not undeniable that with the Bible in our houſes, we are ignorant of its contents; and that hence, in a great meaſure, it ariſes, that the bulk of the Chriſtian world know ſo little, and miſtake ſo greatly, in what regards the religion which they profeſs?

This is not the place for inquiring at large, whence it is that thoſe who aſſent to the poſition, that the Bible is the word of God, and who profeſs to reſt their hopes on the Chriſtian baſis, contentedly acquieſce in a ſtate of ſuch lamentable ignorance. But it may not be improper here to touch on two kindred opinions, from which, in the minds of the more thoughtful and ſerious, this acquieſcence appears to derive much ſecret ſupport. The one is, that it ſignifies little what a man believes; *look to his practice.* The other (of the ſame family) *that ſincerity is all in all.* Let a man's opinions and conduct be what they may, yet, provided he be ſincerely convinced that they are right, however the exigencies of civil ſociety may require him to be dealt with amongſt men, in the ſight of God he cannot be criminal.

It

It would detain us too long fully to ſet forth the various merits of theſe favourite poſitions, of which it is ſurely not the ſmalleſt excellence, that they are of unbounded application, comprehending within their capacious limits, all the errors which have been believed, and many of the moſt deſperate crimes which have been perpetrated among men. The former of them is founded altogether on that groſsly fallacious aſſumption, that a man's opinions will not influence his practice. The latter proceeds on this groundleſs ſuppoſition, that the Supreme Being has not afforded us ſufficient means of diſcriminating truth from falſhood, right from wrong: and it implies, that be a man's opinions or conduct ever ſo wild and extravagant, we are to preſume, that they are as much the reſult of impartial inquiry and honeſt conviction, as if his ſentiments and actions had been ſtrictly conformable to the rules of reaſon and ſobriety. Never indeed was there a principle more general in its uſe, more ſovereign in its potency. How does its beautiful ſimplicity alſo, and compendious brevity, give it rank before the laborious ſubtleties of Bellarmine! Clement, and Ravaillac, and other worthies of a ſimilar ſtamp, from whoſe purity of intention the world has hitherto withheld its due tribute of applauſe, would here have found a ready plea; and their injured innocence ſhall now at length receive its full though tardy vindication. "Theſe however," it may be replied, "are excepted caſes." Certainly they are caſes of which any one who maintains the opinion in queſtion would be glad to diſencumber himſelf; becauſe they clearly expoſe the unſoundneſs of his principle.

But

But it will be incumbent on ſuch an one, firſt to explain with preciſion why they are to be exempted from its operation, and this he will find an impoſſible taſk; for ſincerity, in its popular ſenſe, ſo ſhamefully is the term miſapplied, can be made the criterion of guilt and innocence on no grounds, which will not equally ſerve to juſtify the aſſaſſins who have been inſtanced. The concluſion cannot be eluded; no man was ever more fully perſuaded of the innocence of any action, than theſe men were, that the horrid deed they were about to perpetrate was not lawful merely, but highly meritorious. Thus Clement and Ravaillac being unqueſtionably ſincere, they were therefore indubitably innocent. Nay, the abſurdity of this principle might be ſhewn to be even greater than what has yet been ſtated. It would not be going too far to aſſert, that whilſt it ſcorns the defence of petty villains, of thoſe who ſtill retain the ſenſe of good and evil, it holds forth, like ſome well frequented ſanctuary, a ſecure aſylum to thoſe more finiſhed criminals, who, from long habits of wickedneſs, are loſt alike to the perception as to the practice of virtue; and that it ſelects a ſeared conſcience and a heart become callous to all moral diſtinctions as the ſpecial objects of its care. Nor is it only in prophane hiſtory that inſtances like theſe are to be found, of perſons committing the greateſt crimes with a ſincere conviction of the rectitude of their conduct. Scripture will afford us parallels; and it was ſurely to guard us againſt the very error which we have been now expoſing, that our bleſſed Saviour forewarned his diſciples: "The time cometh, that whoſoever

"killeth

" killeth you will think that he doeth God " ſervice."

A principle like this muſt then be abandoned, and the advocates for ſincerity muſt be compelled to reſtore this abuſed term to its genuine ſignification, and to acknowledge that it muſt imply honeſty of mind, and the faithful uſe of the means of knowledge and of improvement, the deſire of being inſtructed, humble inquiry, impartial conſideration, and unprejudiced judgment. It is to theſe we would earneſtly call you; to theſe (ever to be accompanied with fervent prayers for the divine bleſſing) Scripture every where holds forth the moſt animating promiſes. " Aſk and ye ſhall receive, ſeek and ye " ſhall find, knock and it ſhall be opened unto " you; Ho! every one that thirſteth, come ye " to the waters;" ſuch are the comfortable aſſurances, ſuch the gracious encouragements to the truly ſincere inquirer. How deep will be our guilt if we ſlight all theſe benevolent offers. " How many prophets and kings have " deſired to hear the things that we hear, and " have not heard them!" Great indeed are our opportunities, great alſo is our reſponſibility. Let us awaken to a true ſenſe of our ſituation. We have every conſideration to alarm our fears, or to animate our induſtry. How ſoon may the brightneſs of our meridian ſun be darkened! Or, ſhould the long ſuffering of God ſtill continue to us the mercies which we ſo much abuſe, it will only aggravate our crime, and in the end enhance our puniſhment. The time of reckoning will at length arrive. And when finally ſummoned to the bar of God, to give an account of our ſtewardſhip, what plea can we have to urge in our defence, if we remain willingly and obſti-

obſtinately ignorant of the way which leads to life, with ſuch tranſcendent means of knowing it, and ſuch urgent motives to its purſuit?

CHAPTER II.

CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.

SECT. I.

Inadequate Conceptions of the Corruption of Human Nature.

AFTER conſidering the defective notions of the importance of Chriſtianity *in general*, which prevail among the higher orders of the Chriſtian world, the particular miſconceptions which firſt come under our notice reſpect the corruption and weakneſs of human nature. This is a topic on which it is poſſible that many of thoſe, into whoſe hands the preſent work ſhall fall, may not have beſtowed much attention. If the caſe be ſo, it may be requiſite to intreat them to lend a patient and a ſerious ear. The ſubject is of the deepeſt import. We ſhould not go too far if we were to aſſert, that it lies at the very root of all true Religion, and ſtill more, that it is eminently the baſis and ground-work of Chriſtianity.

So far as the writer has had an opportunity of remarking, the generality of profeſſed Chriſtians among the higher claſſes, either altogether overlook or deny, or at leaſt greatly extenuate the corruption and weakneſs here in queſtion. They

They acknowledge indeed that there is, and ever has been in the world, a great portion of vice and wickedneſs; that mankind have been ever prone to ſenſuality and ſelfiſhneſs, in diſobedience to the more refined and liberal principles of their nature; that in all ages and countries, in public and in private life, innumerable inſtances have been afforded of oppreſſion, of rapacity, of cruelty, of fraud, of envy, and of malice. They own that it is too often in vain that you inform the underſtanding, and convince the judgment. They admit that you do not thereby reform the hearts of men. Though they *know* their duty, they will not practice it; no not even when you have forced them to acknowledge that the path of virtue is that alſo of real intereſt, and of ſolid enjoyment.

Theſe facts are certain; they cannot be diſputed; and they are at the ſame time ſo obvious, that one would have thought that the celebrated apophthegm of the Grecian ſage, "the majority are wicked," would ſcarcely have eſtabliſhed his claim to intellectual ſuperiority.

But though theſe effects of human depravity are every where acknowledged and lamented, we muſt not expect to find them traced to their true origin.

Cauſa latet, vis eſt notiſſima.

Prepare yourſelf to hear rather of frailty and infirmity, of petty tranſgreſſions, of occaſional failings, of ſudden ſurpriſals, and of ſuch other qualifying terms as may ſerve to keep out of view the true ſource of the evil, and without ſhocking the underſtanding, may adminiſter conſolation

ſolation to the pride of human nature. The bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians are uſed to ſpeak of man as of a being, who, naturally pure, and inclined to all virtue, is ſometimes, almoſt involuntary, drawn out of the right courſe, or is overpowered by the violence of temptation. Vice with them is rather an accidental and temporary, than a conſtitutional and habitual diſtemper; a noxious plant, which, though found to live and even to thrive in the human mind, is not the natural growth and production of the ſoil.

Far different is the humiliating language of Chriſtianity. From it we learn that man is an apoſtate creature, fallen from his high original, degraded in his nature, and depraved in his faculties; indiſpoſed to good, and diſpoſed to evil; prone to vice, it is natural and eaſy to him; diſinclined to virtue, it is difficult and laborious; that he is tainted with ſin, not ſlightly and ſuperficially, but radically and to the very core. Theſe are truths which, however mortifying to our pride, one would think (if this very corruption itſelf did not warp the judgment) none would be hardy enough to attempt to controvert. I know not any thing which brings them home ſo forcibly to my own feelings, as the conſideration of what ſtill remains to us of our primitive dignity, when contraſted with our preſent ſtate of moral degradation,

"Into what depth thou ſeeſt,
"From what height fallen."

Examine firſt with attention the natural powers and faculties of man! invention, reaſon, judgment, memory; a mind "of large diſcourſe," "looking before and after," reviewing the paſt, and thence determining for the preſent, and anticipating

ticipating the future; diſcerning, collecting, combining, comparing; capable not merely of apprehending but of admiring the beauty of moral excellence: with fear and hope to warn and animate; with joy and ſorrow to ſolace and ſoften; with love to attach, with ſympathy to harmonize, with courage to attempt, with patience to endure, and with the power of conſcience, that faithful monitor within the breaſt, to enforce the concluſions of reaſon, and direct and regulate the paſſions of the ſoul. Truly we muſt pronounce him "majeſtic though in "ruin." "Happy, happy world," would be the exclamation of the inhabitant of ſome other planet, on being told of a globe like ours, peopled with ſuch creatures as theſe, and abounding with ſituations and occaſions to call forth the multiplied excellencies of their nature. "Happy, "happy world, with what delight muſt your "great Creator and Governor witneſs your "conduct, and what large and merited rewards "await you when your term of probation ſhall "have expired.

"I, bone, quo virtus tua te vocat, i pede fauſto,
"Grandia laturus meritorum præmia."

But we have indulged too long in theſe delightful ſpeculations; a ſad reverſe preſents itſelf on our ſurvey of the *actual* ſtate of man, when, from viewing his *natural* powers, we follow him into *practice*, and ſee the uſes to which he applies them. Take in the whole of the proſpect, view him in every age, and climate, and nation, in every condition and period of ſociety. Where now do you diſcover the characters of his exalted nature? "How is the gold become dim, and the fine gold changed?" How is his reaſon clouded, his affections perverted, his

his conſcience ſtupified! How do anger, and envy, and hatred, and revenge, ſpring up in his wretched boſom! How is he a ſlave to the meaneſt of his appetites! What fatal propenſities does he diſcover to evil! What inaptitude to good!

Dwell awhile on the ſtate of the ancient world; not merely on that benighted part of it where all lay buried in brutiſh ignorance and barbariſm, but on the ſeats of civilized and poliſhed nations, on the empire of taſte, and learning, and philoſophy: yet in theſe choſen regions, with whatever luſtre the ſun of ſcience poured forth its rays, the moral darkneſs was ſo thick "that it might be felt." Behold their ſottiſh idolatries, their abſurd ſuperſtitions, their want of natural affection, their brutal exceſſes, their unfeeling oppreſſion, their ſavage cruelty! Look not to the illiterate and the vulgar, but to the learned and refined. Form not your ideas from the conduct of the leſs reſtrained and more licentious; you will turn away with diſguſt and ſhame from the allowed and familiar habits of the decent and the moral. St. Paul beſt ſtates the facts, and furniſhes the explanation; "becauſe they did not like to retain God in their "knowledge, he gave them over to a reprobate "mind *."

Now

* Exempla duo, quæ pravitatis humanæ vim animo meo luculenter exhibent, non proferre non poſſum. Alterum decens ille Virgilius, alterum Cicero, probus idem verique ſtudioſus, ſuppeditat. Virgilius, innocuam certe paſtorum vitam depicturus, ita incipit.

"Formoſum paſtor Corydon ardebat Alexim."

Cicero in libro de Officiis primo, ubi de actionibus prout inter ſe apte & convenientes ſint, loci, temporis, & agentis ratione habita, differit, argumentum ſic illuſtrat: "Turpe eſt

Now direct your view to another quarter, to the inhabitants of a new hemiſphere, where the baneful practices and contagious example of the old world had never travelled. Surely, among theſe children of nature we may expect to find thoſe virtuous tendencies, for which we have hitherto looked in vain. Alas! our ſearch will ſtill be fruitleſs! They are repreſented by the hiſtorian of America, whoſe account is more favourable than thoſe of ſome other great authorities, as being a compound of pride, and indolence, and ſelfiſhneſs, and cunning, and cruelty*; full of a revenge which nothing could ſatiate, of a ferocity which nothing could ſoften; ſtrangers to the moſt amiable ſenſibilities of nature†. They appeared incapable of conjugal affection, or parental fondneſs, or filial reverence, or ſocial attachments; uniting too with their ſtate of barbariſm, many of the vices and weakneſſes of poliſhed ſociety. Their horrid treatment of captives taken in war, on whoſe bodies they feaſted, after putting them to death

eſt enim, valdeque vitioſum, in re ſevera, convivio dignum, aut delicatum aliquem inferre ſermonem. Bene Pericles, quum haberet collegam in prætura Sophoclem poëtam, hique de communi officio conveniſſent, & caſu formoſus puer præteriret, dixiſſetque Sophocles, O puerum pulchrum Pericle! At enim, inquit Pericles, prætorem Sophoclem decet non ſolum manus, ſed etiam oculus abſtinentes habere. Atquî hoc idem Sophocles, ſi in athletarum probatione dixiſſet, *juſta reprehenſione caruiſſet, tanta vis eſt, & loci & temporis.*"

Quomodo ſeſe res habuiſſe neceſſe eſt, cum vir antiquorum preſtantiſſimis adſcribendus, philoſophiam, immo mores & officia tractans, talia doceret! Qualem ſibi ipſe virtutis normam propoſuerat, ſatis liquet. Vide inter alia, *juſta reprehenſione*, &c. &c; & *tanta vis eſt*, &c. &c.

* Robertſon, Vol. II. p. 130.

† Robertſon, Book IV. Sect. 2. Head, Condition of Women, vol. ii. 8vo. 90, 91.

by

by the moſt cruel tortures, is ſo well known, that we may ſpare the diſguſting recital. No commendable qualities relieve this gloomy picture, except fortitude, and perſeverance, and zeal for the welfare of their little community; if this laſt quality, exerciſed and directed as it was, can be thought deſerving of commendation.

But you give up the heathen nations as indefenſible, and wiſh rather to form your eſtimate of man from a view of countries which have been bleſſed with the light of revelation.—True it is, and with joy let us record the conceſſion, Chriſtianity has ſet the general tone of morals much higher than it was ever found in the Pagan world. She has every where improved the character and multiplied the comforts of ſociety, particularly to the poor and the weak, whom from the beginning ſhe profeſſed to take under her ſpecial patronage. Like her divine Author, "who ſends his rain on the evil and on the "good," ſhe ſhowers down unnumbered bleſſings on thouſands who profit from her bounty, while they forget or deny her power, and ſet at nought her authority. Yet even in this more favoured ſituation we ſhall diſcover too many lamentable proofs of the depravity of man. Nay, this depravity will now become even more apparent and leſs deniable. For what bars does it not now overleap? Over what motives is it not now victorious? Conſider well the ſuperior light and advantages which we enjoy, and then appreciate the ſuperior obligations which are impoſed on us. Conſider in how many caſes our evil propenſities are now kept from breaking forth, by the ſuperior reſtraints under which vice is laid among us by poſitive laws, and by the amended ſtandard of public opinion; and we may

may be aſſiſted in conjecturing what force is to be aſſigned to theſe motives, by the dreadful proofs which have been lately exhibited in a neighbouring country, that when their influence is withdrawn, the moſt atrocious crimes can be perpetrated ſhameleſsly and in the face of day. Conſider then the ſuperior excellence of our moral code, the new principles of obedience furniſhed by the goſpel, and above all, the awful ſanction which the doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity derive from the clear diſcovery of a future ſtate of retribution, and from the annunciation of that tremendous day, "when "we ſhall ſtand before the judgment ſeat of "Chriſt." Yet, in ſpite of all our knowledge thus enforced and preſſed home by this ſolemn notice, how little has been our progreſs in virtue? It has been by no means ſuch as to prevent the adoption, in our days, of various maxims of antiquity, which, when well conſidered, too clearly eſtabliſh the depravity of man. It may not be amiſs to adduce a few inſtances in proof of this aſſertion. It is now no leſs acknowledged than heretofore, that proſperity hardens the heart: that unlimited power is ever abuſed, inſtead of being rendered the inſtrument of diffuſing happineſs: that habits of vice grow up of themſelves, whilſt thoſe of virtue, if to be obtained at all, are of ſlow and difficult formation; that they who draw the fineſt pictures of virtue, and ſeem moſt enamoured of her charms, are often the leaſt under her influence, and by the mereſt trifles are drawn aſide from that line of conduct, which they moſt ſtrongly and ſeriouſly recommend to others, that all this takes place, though moſt of the pleaſures of vice are to be found with leſs alloy in the paths of virtue;

tue; whilſt at the ſame time, theſe paths afford ſuperior and more exquiſite delights, peculiar to themſelves, and are free from the diſeaſes and bitter remorſe, at the price of which vicious gratifications are ſo often purchaſed.

It may ſuffice to touch very ſlightly on ſome other arguments, which it would hardly be right to leave altogether unnoticed: one of theſe (the juſtice of which, however denied by ſuperficial moraliſts, parents of ſtrict principles can abundantly teſtify) may be drawn from the perverſe and froward diſpoſitions perceivable in children, which it is the buſineſs and ſometimes the ineffectual attempt of education to reform. Another may be drawn from the various deceits we are apt to practice on ourſelves, to which no one can be a ſtranger, who has ever contemplated the operations of his own mind with ſerious attention. To the influence of this ſpecies of corruption it has been in a great degree owing, that Chriſtianity itſelf has been too often diſgraced. It has been turned into an engine of cruelty, and amidſt the bitterneſs of perſecution, every trace has diſappeared of the mild and beneficent ſpirit of the religion of Jeſus. In what degree muſt the taint have worked itſelf into the frame, and have corrupted the habit, when the moſt wholeſome nutriment can be thus converted into the deadlieſt poiſon! Wiſhing always to argue from ſuch premiſes as are not only really ſound, but from ſuch as cannot even be queſtioned by thoſe to whom this work is addreſſed, little was ſaid in repreſenting the deplorable ſtate of the Heathen world, reſpecting their defective and unworthy conceptions in what regards the Supreme Being, who even then however "left not himſelf without witneſs, but

"gave

" gave them rain and fruitful ſeaſons, filling their " hearts with food and gladneſs." But ſurely to any who call themſelves Chriſtians, it may be juſtly urged as an aſtoniſhing inſtance of human depravity, that we ourſelves, who enjoy the full light of revelation; to whom God has vouchſafed ſuch clear diſcoveries of what it concerns us to know of his being and attributes; who profeſs to believe " that in him we live, " and move, and have our being;" that to him we owe all the comforts we here enjoy, and the offer of eternal Glory purchaſed for us by the atoning blood of his own Son; (" thanks " be to God for his unſpeakable gift,") that we, thus loaded with mercies, ſhould every one of us be continually chargeable with forgetting his authority, and being ungrateful for his benefits; with ſlighting his gracious propoſals, or receiving them at beſt but heartleſsly and coldly.

But to put the queſtion concerning the natural depravity of man to the ſevereſt teſt: take the beſt of the human ſpecies, the watchful diligent ſelf-denying Chriſtian, and let *him* decide the controverſy; and that, not by inferences drawn from the practices of a thoughtleſs and diſſolute world, but by an appeal to his perſonal experience. Go with him into his cloſet, aſk him *his* opinion of the corruption of the heart, and he will tell you that he is deeply ſenſible of its power, for that he has learned it from much ſelf-obſervation and long acquaintance with the workings of his own mind. He will tell you, that every day ſtrengthens this conviction; yea, that hourly he ſees freſh reaſon to deplore his want of ſimplicity in intention, his infirmity of purpoſe, his low views, his ſelfiſh unworthy deſires, his backwardneſs to ſet about his duty,

his

his languor and coldneſs in performing it: that he finds himſelf obliged continually to confeſs, that he feels within him two oppoſite principles, and that "he cannot do the things that he "would." He cries out in the language of the excellent Hooker, "The little fruit which we "have in holineſs, it is, God knoweth, corrupt "and unſound: we put no confidence at all in "it, we challenge nothing in the world for it, "we dare not call God to reckoning, as if "we had him in our debt books; our conti-"nual ſuit to him is, and muſt be, to bear with "our infirmities, and pardon our offences."

Such is the moral hiſtory, ſuch the condition of man. The figures of the piece may vary, and the colouring is ſometimes of a darker, ſometimes of a lighter hue; but the principles of the compoſition, the grand outlines, are every where the ſame. Wherever we direct our view, we diſcover the melancholy proofs of our depravity; whether we look to ancient or modern times, to barbarous or civilized nations, to the conduct of the world around us, or to the monitor within the breaſt; whether we read, or hear, or act, or think, or feel, the ſame humiliating leſſon is forced upon us,

Juppiter eſt quodcunque vides, quocunque moveris.

Now when we look back to the picture which was formerly drawn of the *natural powers* of man, and compare this his *actual* ſtate with that for which, from a conſideration of thoſe powers, he ſeems to have been originally calculated, how are we to account for the aſtoniſhing contraſt! will frailty or infirmity, or occaſional lapſes, or ſudden ſurpriſals, or any ſuch qualifying terms, convey an adequate idea of the nature, or point out the cauſe of the diſtemper?

temper? How, on any principles of common reaſoning, can we account for it, but by conceiving that man, ſince he came out of the hands of his Creator, has contracted a taint, and that the venom of this ſubtle poiſon has been communicated throughout the race of Adam, every where exhibiting inconteſtible marks of its fatal malignity? Hence it has ariſen, that the appetites deriving new ſtrength, and the powers of reaſon and conſcience being weakened, the latter have feebly and impotently pleaded againſt thoſe forbidden indulgences which the former have ſolicited. Senſual gratifications and illicit affections have debaſed our nobler powers, and indiſpoſed our hearts to the diſcovery of God, and to the conſideration of his perfections; to a conſtant willing ſubmiſſion to his authority, and obedience to his laws. By a repetition of vicious acts, evil habits have been formed within us, and have rivetted the fetters of ſin. Left to the conſequences of our own folly, the underſtanding has grown darker, and the heart more obdurate; reaſon has at length altogether betrayed her truſt, and even conſcience herſelf has aided the deluſion, till, inſtead of deploring our miſerable ſlavery, we have too often hugged, and even gloried in our chains.

Such is the general account of the progreſs of vice, where it is ſuffered to attain to its full growth in the human heart. The circumſtances of individuals will be found indeed to differ; the ſervitude of ſome, if it may be allowed us to continue a figure ſo exactly deſcriptive of the caſe, is more rigorous than that of others, their bonds more galling, their degradation more complete. Some too (it will be remembered that we are ſpeaking of the natural ſtate of man,

without taking Chriſtianity into queſtion) have for a while appeared almoſt to have eſcaped from their confinement; but none are altogether free; all without exception, in a greater or leſs degree bear about them, more viſible or more concealed, the ignominious marks of their captivity.

Such on a full and fair inveſtigation muſt be confeſſed to be the ſtate of facts; and how can this be accounted for on any other ſuppoſition, than that of ſome original taint, ſome radical principle of corruption? All other ſolutions are unſatisfactory, whilſt the potent cauſe which has been aſſigned, does abundantly, and can alone ſufficiently account for the effect. Thus then it appears, that the corruption of human nature is proved by the ſame mode of reaſoning, as has been deemed concluſive in eſtabliſhing the exiſtence, and aſcertaining the laws of the principle of gravitation: that the doctrine reſts on the ſame ſolid baſis as the ſublime philoſophy of Newton: that it is not a mere ſpeculation, and therefore an uncertain though perhaps an ingenious theory, but the ſure reſult of large and actual experiment; deduced from inconteſtable facts, and ſtill more fully approving its truth by harmonizing with the ſeveral parts and accounting for the various phænomena, jarring otherwiſe and inexplicable, of the great ſyſtem of the univerſe.

Revelation, however, here comes in, and ſuſtains the fallible conjectures of our unaſſiſted reaſon. The Holy Scriptures ſpeak of us as fallen creatures: in almoſt every page we ſhall find ſomething that is calculated to abate the loftineſs and ſilence the pretenſions of man. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from

"his

" his youth." " What is man, that he ſhould " be clean? and he which is born of a woman, " that he ſhould be righteous *." " How much " more abominable and filthy is man, which " drinketh iniquity like water †?" " The Lord " looked down from heaven upon the children " of men, to ſee if there were any that did un- " derſtand, and ſeek God. They are all gone " aſide; they are altogether become filthy: " there is none that doeth good, no not one ‡." " Who can ſay, I have made my heart clean, " I am pure from my ſin §?" " The *heart* is de- " ceitful above all things, and deſperately wick- " ed, who can know it." " Behold, I was ſhapen " in wickedneſs, and in ſin hath my mother " conceived me." " We were by nature the " children of wrath, even as others, fulfilling " the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind." " O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver " me from the body of this death!"—Paſſages might be multiplied upon paſſages, which ſpeak the ſame language, and theſe again might be illuſtrated and confirmed at large by various other conſiderations, drawn from the ſame ſacred ſource; ſuch as thoſe which repreſent a thorough change, a renovation of our nature, as being neceſſary to our becoming true Chriſtians; or as thoſe alſo which are ſuggeſted by obſerving that holy men refer their good diſpoſitions and affections to the immediate agency of the Supreme Being.

* Job xv. 14. † Job xv. 16. ‡ Pſalm xiv. 2, 3.
§ Prov. xx. 9.

SECTION II.

Evil Spirit.—Natural State of Man.

BUT in addition to all which has been yet ſtated, the word of God inſtructs us that we have to contend not only with our own natural depravity, but with the power of darkneſs, the Evil Spirit, who rules in the hearts of the wicked, and whoſe dominion we learn from Scripture to be ſo general, as to entitle him to the denomination of "the Prince of this world." There cannot be a ſtronger proof of the difference which exiſts between the religious ſyſtem of the Scriptures, and that of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, than the proof which is afforded by the ſubject now in queſtion. The exiſtence and agency of the Evil Spirit, though ſo diſtinctly and repeatedly affirmed in Scripture, are almoſt univerſally exploded in a country which profeſſes to admit the authority of the ſacred volume. Some other Doctrines of Revelation, the force and real meaning of which are commonly in a great degree explained away, are yet conceded in general terms. But this ſeems almoſt by univerſal conſent to have been abandoned, as a poſt no longer tenable. It is regarded as an evaneſcent prejudice, which it would now be a diſcredit to any man of underſtanding to believe, Like ghoſts and witches and other phantoms, which haunted the night of ſuperſtition, it cannot in theſe more enlightened times ſtand the teſt of our ſeverer ſcrutiny. To be ſuffered to paſs away quietly, is as much as it can hope for; and it might rather expect

expect to be laughed off the ſtage as a juſt object of contempt and deriſion.

But although the Scripture doctrine concerning the Evil Spirit is thus generally exploded, yet were we to conſider the matter ſeriouſly and fairly, we ſhould probably find ground for believing that there is no better reaſon for its being abandoned, than that many abſurd ſtories, concerning ſpirits and apparitions, have been uſed to be believed and propagated amongſt weak and credulous people; and that the Evil Spirit not being the object of our bodily eyes, it would be an inſtance of the ſame weakneſs to give credit to the doctrine of its exiſtence and agency. But to be conſiſtent with ourſelves, we might almoſt as well, on the ſame principle, deny the reality of all other incorporeal beings. What is there, in truth, in the doctrine, which is in itſelf improbable, or which is not confirmed by analogy? We ſee, in fact, that there are wicked men, enemies to God, and malignant towards their fellow creatures, who take pleaſure, and often ſucceed, in drawing in others to the commiſſion of evil. Why then ſhould it be deemed incredible, that there may be one or more ſpiritual intelligences of ſimilar natures and propenſities, who may in like manner be permitted to tempt men to the practice of ſin? Surely we may retort upon our opponents the charge of abſurdity, and juſtly accuſe them of groſs inconſiſtency, in admitting, without difficulty, the exiſtence and operation of theſe qualities in a material being, and yet denying them in an immaterial one (in direct contradiction to the authority of Scripture, which they allow to be concluſive) when they cannot, and will not pretend for a moment, that there is any thing belonging

belonging to the nature of matter, to which theſe qualities naturally adhere.

But to dilate no farther on a topic which, however it may excite the ridicule of the inconſiderate, will ſuggeſt matter of ſerious apprehenſion to all who form their opinions on the authority of the word of God: thus brought as we are into captivity, and expoſed to danger; depraved and weakened within, and tempted from without, it might well fill our hearts with anxiety to reflect, "that the day will come," when "the Heavens being on fire ſhall be diſ-"ſolved, and the elements ſhall melt with fer-"vent heat;" "when the dead, ſmall and great, "ſhall ſtand before the tribunal of God;" and we ſhall have to give account of all things done in the body. We are naturally prompted to turn over the page of revelation with ſolicitude, in order to diſcover the qualities and character of our Judge, and the probable principles of his determination; but this only ſerves to turn painful apprehenſion into fixed and certain terror.—Firſt of the qualities of our Judge. As all nature bears witneſs to his irreſiſtible power, ſo we read in Scripture that nothing can eſcape his obſervation, or elude his diſcovery; not our actions only, but our moſt ſecret cogitations are open to his view. "He is about our path "and about our bed, and ſpieth out all our "ways *." "The Lord ſearcheth all hearts, "and underſtandeth all the imaginations of the "thoughts †."—"And he will bring to light the "hidden things of darkneſs, and will make "manifeſt the counſels of the heart."

* Pſalm cxxxix. 3. † 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

Now,

Now, hear his deſcription and character and the rule of his award: "The Lord our God is "a conſuming fire, even a jealous God."— "He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." "—The ſoul that ſinneth, it ſhall die."— "The wages of ſin is death." Theſe poſitive declarations are enforced by the accounts which, for our warning, we read in ſacred hiſtory, of the terrible vengeance of the Almighty: His puniſhment "the angels who kept not their "firſt eſtate, and whom he hath reſerved in "everlaſting chains under darkneſs unto the "judgment of the great day:" The fate of Sodom and Gomorrah; the ſentence iſſued againſt the idolatrous nations of Canaan, and of which the execution was aſſigned to the Iſraelites, by the expreſs command of God, at their own peril in caſe of diſobedience: The ruin of Babylon, and of Tyre, and of Nineveh, and of Jeruſalem, prophetically denounced as the puniſhment of their crimes, and taking place in an exact and terrible accordance with the divine predictions. Theſe are indeed matter of awful peruſal, ſufficient ſurely to confound the fallacious confidence of any who, on the ground that our Creator muſt be aware of our natural weakneſs, and muſt be of courſe diſpoſed to allow for it, ſhould alledge that, though unable indeed to juſtify ourſelves in the ſight of God, we need not give way to ſuch gloomy apprehenſions, but might throw ourſelves, with aſſured hope, on the infinite benevolence of the Supreme Being. It is indeed true, that with the threatenings of the word of God, there are mixed many gracious declarations of pardon, on repentance, and thorough amendment. But, alas! which of us is there, whoſe conſcience muſt

muſt not reproach him with having trifled with the long-ſuffering of God, and with having but ill kept the reſolutions of amendment, which he had ſome time or other formed in the ſeaſons of recollection and remorſe?—And how is the diſquietude naturally excited by ſuch a retroſpect, confirmed and heightened by paſſages like theſe? "Becauſe I have called, and ye "refuſed; I have ſtretched out my hand, and "no man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought "all my counſel, and would none of my re-"proof; I alſo will laugh at your calamity; I "will mock when your fear cometh: when "your fear cometh as deſolation, and your "deſtruction cometh as a whirlwind; when "diſtreſs and anguiſh cometh upon you: then "ſhall they call upon me, but I will not an-"ſwer; they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall "not find me: for that they hated knowledge, "and did not chuſe the fear of the Lord *." The apprehenſions, which muſt be excited by thus reading the recorded judgments and awful language of Scripture, are confirmed to the inquiſitive and attentive mind, by a cloſe obſervation of the moral conſtitution of the world. Such a one will find occaſion to remark, that all, which has been ſuggeſted of the final conſequences of vice, is in ſtrict analogy to what we may obſerve in the ordinary courſe of human affairs, wherein it will appear, on a careful ſurvey, that God has ſo aſſigned to things their general tendencies, and eſtabliſhed ſuch an order of cauſes and effects, as (however interrupted here below by hindrances and obſtructions apparently of a temporary nature) loudly

* Prov. i. 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

proclaim

proclaim the principles of his moral government, and ſtrongly ſuggeſt, that vice and imprudence will finally terminate in miſery *(a)*. Not that this ſpecies of proof was wanted; for that which we muſt acknowledge, on weighing the evidence, to be a revelation from God, requires not the aid of ſuch a confirmation: but yet, as this accordance might be expected between the words and the works, the paſt and the future ordinations of the ſame Almighty Being, it is no idle ſpeculation to remark, that the viſible conſtitution of things in the world around us, falls in with the repreſentations here given from Scripture of the dreadful conſequences of vice, nay even of what is commonly termed inconſiderateneſs and imprudence.

If ſuch then be indeed our ſad condition, what is to be done? Is there no hope? Nothing left for us, "but a fearful looking for of judg-"ment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall de-"vour the adverſaries †?" Bleſſed be God! we are not ſhut up irrecoverably in this ſad condition: "Turn you to the ſtrong hold, ye pri-"ſoners of hope;" hear one who proclaims his deſignation, "to heal the broken-hearted, to "preach liberty to the captives, and recovering "of ſight to the blind." They who have formed a true notion of their loſt and helpleſs ſtate, will moſt gladly liſten to the ſound, and moſt juſtly eſtimate the value of ſuch a deliverance. And this is the cauſe, which renders it of ſuch preſſing moment not to paſs curſorily over thoſe important topics of the original and ſuperinduced corruption, and weakneſs of man; a diſcuſſion

(a) Vide Butler's Analogy.
† Heb. x. 27.

painful and humiliating to the pride of human nature, to which the mind lends itſelf with difficulty, and hearkens with a mixture of anger and diſguſt; but well ſuited to our caſe, and like the diſtaſteful leſſons of adverſity, permanently uſeful in its conſequences. It is here, never let it be forgotten, that our foundation muſt be laid; otherwiſe our ſuperſtructure, whatever we may think of it, will one day or other prove tottering and inſecure. This is therefore no metaphyſical ſpeculation, but a practical matter. Slight and ſuperficial conceptions of our ſtate of natural degradation, and of our inſufficiency to recover from it of ourſelves, fall in too well with our natural inconſiderateneſs, and produce that fatal inſenſibility to the divine warning to "flee "from the wrath to come," which we cannot but obſerve to prevail ſo generally. Having no due ſenſe of the malignity of our diſeaſe, and of its dreadful iſſue, we do not ſet ourſelves to work in earneſt to obtain the remedy, as to a buſineſs arduous indeed, but indiſpenſable: for it muſt ever be careſully remembered, that this deliverance is not *forced on us*, but *offered to us*; we are furniſhed indeed with every help, and are always to bear in mind, that we are unable of ourſelves to will or to do rightly; but we are plainly admoniſhed to "work out our own ſalvation "with fear and trembling *."—Watchful, for we are encompaſſed with dangers; "putting "on the whole armour of God," for "we are "beſet with enemies."

May we be enabled to ſhake off that lethargy which is ſo apt to creep upon us! For this end, a deep practical conviction of our natural depra-

* Philippians, ii. 12.

vity

vity and weakneſs will be found of eminent advantage. As it is by this we muſt at firſt be rouzed from our fallacious ſecurity, ſo by this we muſt be kept wakeful and active unto the end. Let us therefore make it our buſineſs to have this doctrine firmly ſeated in our underſtandings, and radically worked into our hearts. With a view to the former of theſe objects, we ſhould often ſeriouſly and attentively conſider the firm grounds on which it reſts. It is plainly made known to us by the light of nature, and irreſiſtibly enforced on us by the dictates of our unaſſiſted underſtandings. But leſt there ſhould be any ſo obſtinately dull, as not to diſcern the force of the evidence ſuggeſted to our reaſon, and confirmed by all experience, or rather ſo heedleſs as not to notice it, the authoritative ſtamp of Revelation is ſuperadded, as we have ſeen, to complete the proof; and we muſt therefore be altogether inexcuſable, if we ſtill remain unconvinced by ſuch an accumulated maſs of argument.

But we muſt not only *aſſent* to the doctrine clearly, but *feel* it ſtrongly. To this end, let the power of habit be called in to our aid. Let us accuſtom ourſelves to refer to our natural depravity, as to their primary cauſe, the ſad inſtances of vice and folly of which we read, or which we ſee around us, or to which we feel the propenſities in our own boſoms; ever vigilant and diſtruſtful of ourſelves, and looking with an eye of kindneſs and pity on the faults and infirmities of others, whom we ſhould learn to regard with the ſame tender concern as that with which the ſick are uſed to ſympathize with thoſe who are ſuffering under the ſame diſtemper as themſelves. This leſſon once well acquired, we

ſhall

ſhall feel the benefit of it in all our future progreſs; and though it be a leſſon which we are ſlow to learn, it is one in which ſtudy and experience, the incidents of every day, and every freſh obſervation of the workings of our own hearts, will gradually concur to perfect us. Let it not, after all then, be our reproach, and at length our ruin, that theſe abundant means of inſtruction are poſſeſſed in vain.

SECTION III.

Corruption of Human Nature.—Objection.

BUT there is one difficulty ſtill behind, more formidable than all the reſt. The pride of man is loth to be humbled. Forced to abandon the plea of innocence, and preſſed ſo cloſely that he can no longer eſcape from the concluſion to which we would drive him, ſome more bold objector faces about and ſtands at bay, endeavouring to juſtify what he cannot deny, "Whatever "I am," he contends, "I am what my Creator "made me. I inherited a nature, you yourſelf "confeſs, depraved, and prone to evil: how "then can I withſtand the temptations to ſin by "which I am environed? If this plea cannot "eſtabliſh my innocence, it muſt excuſe or at "leaſt extenuate my guilt. Frail and weak as I "am, a Being of infinite juſtice and goodneſs "will never try me by a rule, which however "equitable in the caſe of creatures of a higher "nature, is altogether diſproportionate to mine."

Let not my readers be alarmed! The writer is not going to enter into the diſcuſſion of the grand

grand queſtion concerning the origin of moral evil, or to attempt at large to reconcile its exiſtence and conſequent puniſhment with the acknowledged attributes and perfections of God. Theſe are queſtions, of which, if one may judge from the little ſucceſs with which the acuteſt and profoundeſt reaſoners have been ever labouring to ſolve the difficulties they contain, the full and clear comprehenſion is above the intellect of man. Yet, as ſuch an objection as that which has been ſtated is ſometimes heard from the mouths of profeſſed Chriſtians, it muſt not be paſſed by without a few ſhort obſervations.

Were the language in queſtion to be addreſſed to us by an avowed ſceptic, though it might not be very difficult to expoſe to him the futility of *his* reaſonings, we ſhould almoſt deſpair of ſatisfying him of the ſoundneſs of our own. We ſhould perhaps ſuggeſt impoſſibilities, which might ſtand in the way of ſuch a ſyſtem as he would eſtabliſh: we might indeed point out wherein (arguing from conceſſions which he would freely make) his pre-conceptions concerning the conduct of the Supreme Being, had been in fact already contradicted, particularly by the exiſtence at all of natural or moral evil: and if thus proved erroneous in one inſtance, why might they not be ſo likewiſe in another? But though by theſe and ſimilar arguments we might at length ſilence our objector, we could not much expect to bring him over to our opinions. We ſhould probably do better, if we were to endeavour rather to draw him off from theſe dark and ſlippery regions, (ſlippery in truth they are to every human foot) and to contend with him, where we might tread with firmneſs and freedom, on ſure ground, and in the light of day.

Then

Then we might fairly lay before him all the various arguments for the truth of our holy religion; arguments which have been ſufficient to ſatisfy the wiſeſt, and the beſt, and the ableſt of men. We ſhould afterwards perhaps inſiſt on the abundant confirmation Chriſtianity receives from its being exactly ſuited to the nature and wants of man; and we might conclude, with fairly putting it to him, whether all this weight of evidence were to be overbalanced by this one difficulty, on a ſubject ſo confeſſedly high and myſterious, conſidering too that he muſt allow, we ſee but a part (O how ſmall a part!) of the univerſal creation of God, and that our faculties are wholly incompetent to judge of the ſchemes of his infinite wiſdom. This, if the writer may be permitted to offer his own judgment, is (at leaſt in general) the beſt mode, in the caſe of the objection now in queſtion, of dealing with unbelievers; and to adopt the contrary plan, ſeems ſomewhat like that of any one, who having to convince ſome untutored Indian of the truth of the Copernican ſyſtem, inſtead of beginning with plain and ſimple propoſitions, and leading him on to what is more abſtruſe and remote, ſhould ſtate to him at the outſet ſome aſtoniſhing problems, to which the underſtanding can only yield its ſlow aſſent, when conſtrained by the deciſive force of demonſtration. The novice, inſtead of lending himſelf to ſuch a miſtaken method of inſtruction, would turn away in diſguſt, and be only hardened againſt his preceptor. But it muſt be remembered, that the preſent work is addreſſed to thoſe who acknowledge the authority of the holy Scriptures. And in order to convince all ſuch that there is, ſomewhere or other, a fallacy

lacy in our objector's reaſoning, it will be ſufficient to eſtabliſh that though the word of God clearly aſſerts the juſtice and goodneſs of the Supreme Being, and alſo the natural depravity of man, yet it no leſs clearly lays down that this natural depravity ſhall never be admitted as an excuſe for ſin, but that "they which have done "evil, ſhall riſe to the reſurrection of damna-"tion *."—"That the wicked ſhall be turned "into hell, and all the people that forget God." And it is worthy of remark, that, as if for the very purpoſe of more effectually ſilencing thoſe unbelieving doubts which are ever ſpringing up in the human heart, our bleſſed Saviour, though the meſſenger of peace and good will to man, has again and again repeated theſe awful denunciations.

Nor (it muſt alſo be remarked) are the holy Scriptures leſs clear and full in guarding us againſt ſuppoſing our ſins, or the dreadful conſequences of them, to be chargeable on God.—"Let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am "tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted "with evil, neither tempteth he any man †:" "The Lord is not willing that any ſhould pe-"riſh ‡." And again, where the idea is repelled as injurious to his character,—"Have I "any pleaſure at all that the wicked ſhould die? "ſaith the Lord God; and not that he ſhould "return from his ways, and live §?" "For I "have no pleaſure in the death of him that "dieth, ſaith the Lord God ‖." Indeed almoſt every page of the word of God contains ſome warning or invitation to ſinners; and all theſe,

* John, v. 29. † James, i. 13. ‡ 2 Peter, iii. 9.
§ Ezek. xviii. 23. ‖ Ezek. xviii. 32.

to

to a conſiderate mind, muſt unqueſtionably be proofs of our preſent poſition.

It has been the more neceſſary not to leave unnoticed the objection which we have been now refuting, becauſe, where not admitted to ſuch an unqualified extent as altogether to take away the moral reſponſibility of man, and when not avowed in the daring language in which it has been above ſtated; it may frequently be obſerved to exiſt in an inferior degree: and often, when not diſtinctly formed into ſhape, it lurks in ſecret, diffuſing a general cloud of doubt or unbelief, or lowering our ſtandard of right, or whiſpering fallacious comfort, and producing a ruinous tranquillity. Not to anticipate what will more properly come under diſcuſſion, when we conſider the nature and ſtrictneſs of practical Chriſtianity; let us here, however, remark, that though the holy Scriptures ſo clearly ſtate the natural corruption and weakneſs of man, yet they never, in the moſt minute degree, countenance, but throughout directly oppoſe, the ſuppoſition to which we are often too forward to liſten, that this corruption and weakneſs will be admitted as lowering the demands of divine juſtice, and in ſome ſort palliating our tranſgreſſions of the laws of God. It would not be difficult to ſhew that ſuch a notion is at war with the whole ſcheme of redemption by the atonement of Chriſt. But perhaps it may be enough when any ſuch ſuggeſtions as thoſe which we are condemning force themſelves into the imagination of a Chriſtian, to recommend it to him to ſilence them by what is their beſt practical anſwer: that if our natural condition be depraved and weak, our temptations numerous, and our Almighty Judge infinitely holy; yet that the

offers

offers to penitent ſinners of pardon and grace, and ſtrength, are univerſal and unlimited. Let it not however ſurpriſe us, if in all this there ſeem to be involved difficulties which we cannot fully comprehend. How many ſuch every where preſent themſelves! Scarcely is there an object around us, that does not afford endleſs matter of doubt and argument. The meaneſt reptile which crawls on the earth, nay, every herb and flower which we behold, baffles the imbecility of our limited inquiries. All nature calls upon us to be humble. Can it then be ſurpriſing if we are at a loſs on this queſtion, which reſpects, not the properties of matter, or of numbers, but the counſels and ways of him whoſe "Underſtanding is infinite *." "whoſe judg-"ments are declared to be unſearchable, and his "ways paſt finding out †?" In this our ignorance however, we may calmly repoſe ourſelves on his own declaration, "That though clouds "and darkneſs are round about him, yet "righteouſneſs and judgment are the habita-"tion of his throne ‡." Let it alſo be remembered, that if in Chriſtianity ſome things are difficult, that which it moſt concerns us to know, is plain and obvious. To this it is true wiſdom to attach ourſelves, aſſenting to what is revealed where above our faculties, we do not ſay contradictory to them, on the credit of what is clearly diſcerned, and ſatisfactorily eſtabliſhed. In truth, we are all perhaps too apt to plunge into depths, which it is beyond our power to fathom; and it was to warn us againſt this very error, that the inſpired writer, when he has been threatening the people, whom God had ſe-

* Pſalm cxlvii. 5. † Rom. xi. 33. ‡ Pſalm xcvii. 2.

lected

lected as the objects of his special favour, with the most dreadful punishments, if they should forsake the law of the Lord, and has introduced surrounding nations as asking the meaning of the severe infliction, winds up the whole with this instructive admonition; "Secret things be-"long unto the Lord our God: but those which "are revealed belong unto us, and to our chil-"dren for ever, that we may *do* all the words of "this law*."

To any one who is seriously impressed with a sense of the critical state in which we are here placed, a short and uncertain space in which to make our peace with God, and then the last judgment, and an eternity of unspeakable happiness or misery, it is indeed an awful and an affecting spectacle, to see men thus busying themselves in these vain speculations of an arrogant curiosity, and trifling with their dearest, their everlasting interests. It is but a feeble illustration of this exquisite folly, to compare it to the conduct of some convicted rebel, who, when brought into the presence of his Sovereign, instead of seizing the occasion to sue for mercy, should even neglect and trifle with the pardon which should be offered to him, and insolently employ himself in prying into his Sovereign's designs, and criticising his counsels. Our case indeed is, in another point of comparison, but too much like that of the convicted rebel. But there is this grand difference—that at the best, his success must be uncertain, ours, if it be not our own fault, is sure; and while, on the one hand, our guilt is unspeakably greater than that of any rebel against an earthly monarch; so, on

* Deut. xxix. 29.

the

the other, we know that our Sovereign is "Long-ſuffering, and eaſy to be intreated;" more ready to grant, than we to aſk, forgiveneſs. Well then may we adopt the language of the poet:

> What better can we do, than - - - proſtrate fall
> Before him reverent; and there confeſs
> Humbly our faults, and pardon beg; with tears
> Watering the ground, and with our ſighs the air
> Frequenting, ſent from hearts contrite, in ſign
> Of ſorrow unfeign'd, and humiliation meek?

CHAPTER III.

Chief defects of the Religious Syſtem of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians, in what regards our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Holy Spirit—with a Diſſertation concerning the uſe of the Paſſions in Religion.

SECT. I.

SCRIPTURE DOCTRINES.

THAT "God ſo loved the world, as of his "tender mercy to give his only Son Jeſus Chriſt "for our redemption:"

That our bleſſed Lord willingly left the glory of the Father, and was made man;

That "he was deſpiſed and rejected of men, "a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with "grief:"

That "he was wounded for our tranſgreſſions; "that he was bruiſed for our iniquities:"

That "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of "us all:"

That

That at length "he humbled himſelf even to "the death of the Croſs, for us miſerable ſin-"ners; to the end that all who with hearty re-"pentance and true faith, ſhould come to him, "might not periſh, but have everlaſting life:"

That he "is now at the right hand of God, "making interceſſion" for his people:

That "being reconciled to God by the death "of his Son, we may come boldly unto the "throne of grace, to obtain mercy and find "grace to help in time of need:"

That our Heavenly Father "will ſurely give "his Holy Spirit to them that aſk him:"

That "the Spirit of God muſt dwell in us;" and that "if any man have not the Spirit of "Chriſt, he is none of his:"

That by this divine influence "we are to be "renewed in knowledge after the image of him "who created us," and "to be filled with the "fruits of righteouſneſs, to the praiſe of the "glory of his grace;"—that "being thus made "meet for the inheritance of the ſaints in light," we ſhall ſleep in the Lord; and that when the laſt trumpet ſhall ſound, this corruption ſhall put on incorruption—and that being at length perfected after his likeneſs, we ſhall be admitted into his heavenly kingdom.

Theſe are the leading Doctrines concerning our Saviour, and the Holy Spirit, which are taught in the Holy Scriptures, and held by the Church of England. The truth of them, agreeably to our general plan, will be taken for granted. Few of thoſe, who have been uſed to join in the eſtabliſhed form of worſhip, can have been, it is hoped, ſo inattentive, as to be ignorant of theſe grand truths, which are to be found every where diſperſed throughout our excellent

cellent Liturgy. Would to God it could be presumed, with equal confidence, that all who assent to them in terms, discern their force and excellency in the understanding, and feel their power in the affections, and their transforming influence in the heart. What lively emotions are they calculated to excite in us of deep self-abasement, and abhorrence of our sins; and of humble hope, and firm faith, and heavenly joy, and ardent love, and active unceasing gratitude!

But here, it is to be feared, will be found the grand defect of the religion of the bulk of professed Christians; a defect, like the palsy at the heart, which, while in its first attack, it changes but little the exterior appearance of the body, extinguishes the internal principle of heat and motion, and soon extends its benumbing influence to the remotest fibres of the frame. This defect is closely connected with that which was the chief subject of the last chapter: "they that "are whole need not a physician, but they that "are sick." Had we duly felt the burthen of our sins, that they are a load which our own strength is wholly unable to support, and that the weight of them must finally sink us into perdition, our hearts would have danced at the sound of the gracious invitation, "Come unto "me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, "and I will give you rest *." But in those who have scarcely felt their sins as any incumbrance, it would be mere affectation to pretend to very exalted conceptions of the value and acceptableness of the proffered deliverance. This pretence accordingly, is seldom now kept up; and the most superficial observer, comparing the sen-

* Matt. xi. 28.

timents

timents and views of the bulk of the Chriſtian world, with the articles ſtill retained in their creed, and with the ſtrong language of Scripture, muſt be ſtruck with the amazing diſproportion.

To paſs over the throng from whoſe minds Religion is altogether excluded by the buſineſs or the vanities of life, how is it with the more decent and moral? To what criterion ſhall we appeal? Are their hearts really filled with theſe things, and warmed by the love which they are adapted to inſpire? Then ſurely their minds are apt to ſtray to them almoſt unſeaſonably; or at leaſt to haſten back to them with eagerneſs, when eſcaped from the eſtrangment impoſed by the neceſſary cares and buſineſs of life. He was a maſterly deſcriber of human nature, who thus pourtrayed the characters of an undiſſembled affection;

> "Unſtaid and fickle in all other things,
> "Save in the conſtant image of the object,
> "That is beloved."

"And how," it may be perhaps replied, "do "you know, but that the minds of theſe people "are thus occupied? Can you look into the "boſoms of men?" Let us appeal to a teſt to which we reſorted in a former inſtance. "Out of the abundance of the heart," it has been pronounced, "the mouth ſpeaketh."—Take theſe perſons then in ſome well ſelected hour, and lead the converſation to the ſubject of Religion. The utmoſt which can be effected is, to bring them to talk of things in the groſs. They appear loſt in generalities; there is nothing preciſe and determinate, nothing which implies a mind uſed to the contemplation of its object. In vain you ſtrive to bring them to ſpeak on that

that topic, which one might expect to be ever uppermoſt in the hearts of redeemed ſinners. They elude all your endeavours; and if you make mention of it yourſelf, it is received with no very cordial welcome at leaſt, if not with unequivocal diſguſt; it is at the beſt a forced and formal diſcuſſion. The excellence of our Saviour's moral precepts, the kindneſs and ſimplicity, and ſelf-denial and unblemiſhed purity of his life, his patience and meekneſs in the hour of death, cannot indeed be ſpoken of but with admiration, when ſpoken of at all, as they have often extorted unwilling praiſe from the moſt daring and malignant infidels. But are not theſe mentioned as qualities in the abſtract, rather than as the perfections and lineaments of our patron and benefactor and friend, "who "loved us, and gave himſelf for us;" of him "who died for *our* offences, and roſe again for "*our* juſtification;" who is even now at the "right hand of God, making interceſſion for "*us?*" Who would think that the kindneſs and humanity, and ſelf-denial, and patience in ſuffering, which we ſo drily commend, had been exerted towards *ourſelves*, in acts of more than finite benevolence of which *we* were to derive the benefit, in condeſcenſions and labours ſubmitted to for *our* ſakes, in pain and ignominy, endured for *our* deliverance?

But theſe grand truths are not ſuffered to vaniſh altogether from our remembrance. Thanks to the compilers of our Liturgy, more than to too many of the occupiers of our pulpits, they are forced upon our notice in their juſt bearings and connections, as often as we attend the ſervice of the church. Yet is it too much to affirm, that though there entertained with decorum,

rum, as what belong to the day and place, and occupation, they are yet too generally heard of with little intereſt; like the legendary tales of ſome venerable hiſtorian, or other tranſactions of great antiquity, if not of doubtful credit, which, though important to our anceſtors, relate to times and circumſtances ſo different from our own, that we cannot be expected to take any great concern in them? We hear of them therefore with apparent indifference; we repeat them almoſt as it were by rote, aſſuming by turns the language of the deepeſt humiliation and of the warmeſt thankfulneſs, with a calm unaltered compoſure; and when the ſervice of the day is ended, they are diſmiſſed altogether from our thoughts, till on the return of another Sunday, a freſh attendance on public worſhip gives occaſion for the renewed expreſſions of our periodical gratitude. In noticing ſuch lukewarmneſs as this, ſurely the writer were to be pardoned, if he were to be betrayed into ſome warmth of condemnation. The Unitarian and Socinian indeed, who deny, or explain away the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel, may be allowed to feel, and talk of theſe grand truths with little emotion. But in thoſe who profeſs a ſincere belief in them, this coldneſs is inſupportable. The greateſt poſſible ſervices of man to man muſt appear contemptible, when compared with "the "unſpeakable mercies of Chriſt:" mercies ſo dearly bought, ſo freely beſtowed—A deliverance from eternal miſery—The gift of "a crown "of glory, that fadeth not away." Yet, what judgment ſhould we form of ſuch conduct, as is here cenſured, in the caſe of any one who had received ſome ſignal ſervices from a fellow creature? True love is an ardent, and an active

principle—

principle—a cold, a dormant, a phlegmatic gratitude, are contradictions in terms. When theſe generous affections really exiſt in vigour, are we not ever fond of dwelling on the value, and enumerating the merits of our benefactor? How are we moved when any thing is aſſerted to his diſparagement! How do we delight to tell of his kindneſs! With what pious care do we preſerve any memorial of him, which we may happen to poſſeſs? How gladly do we ſeize any opportunity of rendering to him, or to thoſe who are dear to him, any little good offices, which, though in themſelves of ſmall intrinſic worth, may teſtify the ſincerity of our thankfulneſs! The very mention of his name will cheer the heart, and light up the countenance! And if he be now no more, and if he had made it his dying requeſt that, in a way of his own appointment, we would occaſionally meet to keep the memory of his perſon, and of his ſervices in lively exerciſe; how ſhould we reſent the idea of failing in the performance of ſo ſacred an obligation!

Such are the genuine characters, ſuch the natural workings of a lively gratitude. And can we believe, without doing violence to the moſt eſtabliſhed principles of human nature, that where the *effects* are ſo different, the *internal principle* is in truth the ſame?

If the love of Chriſt be thus languid in the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, their joy and truſt in him cannot be expected to be very vigorous. Here again we find reaſon to remark, that there is nothing diſtinct, nothing ſpecific, nothing which implies a mind acquainted with the nature, and familiarized with the uſe of the Chriſtian's privileges, habitually ſolacing itſelf with the hopes held out by the Goſpel, and animated

by the ſenſe of its high relations, and its glorious reverſion.

The doctrine of the ſanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, appears to have met with ſtill worſe treatment. It would be to convey a very inadequate idea of the ſcantineſs of the conceptions on this head, of the bulk of the Chriſtian world, to affirm merely, that they are too little conſcious of the inefficacy of their own unaſſiſted endeavours after holineſs of heart and life, and that they are not daily employed in humbly and diligently uſing the appointed means for the reception and cultivation of the divine aſſiſtance. It would hardly be to go beyond the truth to aſſert, that for the moſt part their notions on this ſubject are ſo confuſed and faint, that they can ſcarcely be ſaid in any fair ſenſe to believe the doctrine at all.

The writer of theſe ſheets is by no means unapprized of the objections which he may expect from thoſe, whoſe opinions he has been ſo freely condemning. He is prepared to hear it urged, that often where there have been the ſtrongeſt pretences to the religious affections, of which the want has now been cenſured, there has been little or nothing of the reality of them; and that even omitting the inſtances (which however have been but too frequent) of ſtudied hypocriſy, what have aſſumed to themſelves the name of religious affections, have been merely the flights of a lively imagination, or the working of a heated brain; in particular, that this love of our Saviour, which has been ſo warmly recommended, is no better than a vain fervor, which dwells only in the diſordered mind of the enthuſiaſt. That Religion is of a more ſteady nature; of a more ſober and manly quality; and

that

that ſhe rejects with ſcorn, the ſupport of a mere feeling, ſo volatile and indeterminate, ſo trivial and uſeleſs, as that with which we would aſſociate her; a feeling varying in different men, and even in the ſame man at different times, according to the accidental flow of the animal ſpirits; a feeling, laſtly, of which it may perhaps be ſaid, we are from our very nature, hardly ſuſceptible towards an inviſible Being.

"As to the operations of the Holy Spirit," it may probably be further urged, that "it is "perhaps ſcarcely worth while to ſpend much "time in inquiring into the theory, when, in "practice at leaſt, it is manifeſt, that there is "no ſure criterion whereby any one can aſcer-"tain the reality of them, even in his own caſe, "much leſs in that of another. All we know "is, that pretenders to theſe extraordinary aſ-"ſiſtances, have never been wanting to abuſe "the credulity of the vulgar, and to try the "patience of the wiſe. From the canting hy-"pocrites and wild fanatics of the laſt century, "to their leſs dangerous, chiefly becauſe leſs "ſucceſsful, deſcendants of the preſent day, we "hear the ſame unwarranted claims, the ſame "idle tales, the ſame low cant; and we may "diſcern not ſeldom the ſame mean artifices "and mercenary ends. The doctrine, to ſay "the beſt of it, can only ſerve to favour the in-"dolence of man, while profeſſing to furniſh "him with a compendious method of becoming "wiſe and good, it ſuperſedes the neceſſity of "his own perſonal labours. Quitting therefore "all theſe ſlothful and chimerical ſpeculations, "it is true wiſdom to attach ourſelves to what "is more ſolid and practical; to the work which "you will not yourſelf deny to be ſufficiently

" difficult to find us of itſelf full employment: " the work of rectifying the diſorders of the " paſſions, and of implanting and cultivating " the virtues of the moral character."—" It is " the ſervice of the underſtanding which God " requires of us, which you would degrade into " a mere matter of bodily temperament, and " imaginary impulſes. You are contending for " that which not only is altogether unworthy of " our Divine Maſter, but which, with conſi- " derate men, has ever brought his religion into " ſuſpicion and diſrepute, and under a ſhew of " honouring him, ſerves only to injure and diſ- " credit his cauſe." Our Objector, warming as he proceeds, will perhaps aſſume a more impatient tone. " Have not theſe doctrines," he may exclaim, " been ever perverted to purpoſes " the moſt diſgraceful to the Religion of Jeſus? " If you want an inſtance, look to the ſtandard " of the inquiſition, and behold the pious Do- " minicans torturing their miſerable victims for " the Love of Chriſt *. Or would you rather " ſee the effects of your principles on a larger " ſcale, and *by wholeſale* (if the phraſe may be " pardoned;) caſt your eyes acroſs the Atlantic, " and let your zeal be edified by the holy acti- " vity of Cortez and Pizarro, and their apoſtles " of the weſtern hemiſphere. To what elſe " have been owing the extenſive ravages of na- " tional perſecutions, and religious wars and " cruſades; whereby rapacity, and pride, and " cruelty, ſheltering themſelves (ſometimes even " from the furious bigots themſelves) under the " maſk of this ſpecious principle, have ſo often " afflicted the world? The Prince of Peace has

* This was the motto on their banner.

" been

" been made to aſſume the port of a ferocious " conqueror, and forgetting the meſſage of good " will to men, has iſſued forth like a ſecond " Scourge of the Earth *, to plague and deſo- " late the human ſpecies."

Objection diſcuſſed.

THAT the ſacred name of Religion has been too often proſtituted to the moſt deteſtable purpoſes; that furious bigots and bloody perſecutors, and ſelf-intereſted hypocrites of all qualities and dimenſions, from the rapacious leader of an army, to the canting oracle of a congregation, have falſely called themſelves Chriſtians, are melancholy and humiliating truths, which (as none ſo deeply lament them) none will more readily admit, than they who beſt underſtand the nature, and are moſt concerned for the honour of Chriſtianity. We are ready to acknowledge alſo without diſpute, that the religious affections, and the doctrine of divine aſſiſtances, have almoſt at all times been more or leſs diſgraced by the falſe pretences and extravagant conduct of wild fanatics and brain-ſick enthuſiaſts. All this, however, is only as it happens in other inſtances, wherein the depravity of man perverts the bounty of God. Why is it here only to be made an argument, that there is danger of abuſe? So is there alſo in the caſe of all the potent and operative principles, whether in the natural or moral world. Take for an inſtance the powers and properties of matter. Theſe were doubtleſs deſigned by Providence for our comfort and well-being; yet they are often

* Title of Attila king of the Huns, whoſe deſolating ravages are well known.

miſapplied

miſapplied to trifling purpoſes, and ſtill more frequently turned into ſo many agents of miſery and death. On this fact indeed is founded the well-known maxim, not more trite than juſt, that "the beſt things when corrupted become "the worſt;" a maxim which is eſpecially juſt in the inſtance of Religion. For in this caſe it is not merely, as in ſome others, that a great power, when miſchievouſly applied, muſt be hurtful in proportion to its ſtrength; but that the very principle on which in general we depend for reſtraining and retarding the progreſs of evil, not only ceaſes to interpoſe any kindly check, but is actively operative in the oppoſite direction. But will you therefore diſcard Religion altogether? The experiment was lately tried in a a neighbouring country, and profeſſedly on this very ground. The effects however with which it was attended, do not much encourage its repetition. But ſuppoſe Religion were diſcarded, then Liberty remains to plague the world; a power which though when well employed, the diſpenſer of light and happineſs, has been often proved, and eminently in this very inſtance, to be capable when abuſed, of becoming infinitely miſchievous. Well then, extinguiſh Liberty. Then what more abuſed by falſe pretenders, than Patriotiſm? Well, extinguiſh Patriotiſm. But then the wicked career to which we have adverted, muſt have been checked but for Courage. Blot out Courage—and ſo might you proceed to extinguiſh one by one, Reaſon, and Speech, and Memory, and all the diſcriminating prerogatives of man. But perhaps more than enough has been already urged in reply to an objection, which bottoms on ground ſo indefenſible, as that which would

equally

equally warrant our condemning any phyſical or moral faculty altogether, on account of its being occaſionally abuſed.

As to the poſition of our Opponent, that there is no way whereby the validity of any pretenſions to the religious affections may be aſcertained; it muſt partly be admitted. Doubtleſs we are not able always to read the hearts of men, and to diſcover their real characters; and hence it is, that we in ſome meaſure lie open to the falſe and hypocritical pretences which are brought forward againſt us ſo triumphantly. But then theſe pretences no more prove all ſimilar claims to be founded in falſehood and hypocriſy, than there having been many falſe and intereſted pretenders to wiſdom and honeſty, would prove that there can be no ſuch thing as a wiſe or an honeſt man. We do not argue thus but where our reaſon is under a corrupt bias. Why ſhould we be ſo much ſurpriſed and ſcandalized, when theſe impoſtors are detected in the church of Chriſt? It is no more than our bleſſed Maſter himſelf taught us to expect; and when the old difficulty is ſtated, "didſt thou "not ſow good ſeed in thy field, whence then "hath it tares?" his own anſwer furniſhes the beſt ſolution,—"an enemy hath done this."—Hypocriſy is indeed *deteſtable*, and enthuſiaſm ſufficiently miſchievous to juſtify our guarding againſt its approaches with jealous care. Yet it may not be improper to take this occaſion for obſerving, that we are now and then apt to draw too unfavourable concluſions from unpleaſant appearances, which may perhaps be chiefly or altogether owing to groſs or confuſed conceptions, or to a diſguſting formality of demeanor, or to indeterminate, low, or improperly familiar expreſſions.

expreſſions. The mode and language, in which a vulgar man will expreſs himſelf on the ſubject of Religion, will probably be vulgar, and it is difficult for people of literature and refinement not to be unreaſonably ſhocked by ſuch vulgarities. But we ſhould at leaſt endeavour to correct the raſh judgments which we may be diſpoſed to form on theſe occaſions, and ſhould learn to recognize and to prize a ſound texture and juſt configuration, though diſguiſed beneath a homely or uncouth drapery. It was an Apoſtle who declared that he had come (to the learned and accompliſhed Grecians too) "not "with excellency of ſpeech, or the wiſdom of "words." From theſe he had ſtudiouſly abſtained, leſt he ſhould have ſeemed to owe his ſucceſs rather to the graces of oratory, than to the efficacy of his doctrines, and to the divine power with which they were accompanied. Even in our own times, when, the extraordinary operations and miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit having ceaſed, the neceſſity of ſtudy and preparation, and of attention to manner as well as matter, in order to qualify men to become teachers of religion, are no longer ſuperſeded, yet it is no more than an act of juſtice explicitly to remark, that a body of Chriſtians, which from the peculiarly offenſive groſſneſſes of language in uſe among them, had, not without reaſon, excited ſuſpicions of the very worſt nature, have ſince reclaimed their character *(b)*, and have perhaps excelled all mankind in ſolid and unequivocal proofs of the love of Chriſt, and of

(b) Vide the teſtimony of Weſt India merchants to the Moravians, in the Report of the Privy Council on the Slave Trade.

the

the moſt ardent, and active, and patient zeal in his ſervice. It is a zeal tempered with prudence, ſoftened with meekneſs, ſoberly aiming at great ends by the gradual operation of well adapted means, ſupported by a courage which no danger can intimidate, and a quiet conſtancy which no hardſhips can exhauſt.

SECT. II.

On the Admiſſion of the Paſſions into Religion.

THE objection of our Opponent, that by inſiſting on the obligation of making our bleſſed Saviour the object of our religious affections, we are degrading the worſhip of the underſtanding, and are ſubſtituting and raiſing up a ſet of mere feelings in its ſtead, is one which deſerves our moſt ſerious conſideration. If it be juſt, it is deciſive; for ours muſt be unqueſtionably "a "reaſonable ſervice *." The Objector muſt mean, either, that theſe affections are unreaſonable in themſelves, or that they are miſplaced in religion. He can ſcarcely however intend that the affections are in their own nature unreaſonable. To ſuppoſe him to maintain this poſition, were to ſuppoſe him ignorant of what every ſchoolboy knows of the mechaniſm of the human mind. We ſhall therefore take it for granted, that this cannot be his meaning, and proceed to examine the latter part of the alternative. Here alſo it may either be intended, that the affections are miſplaced in Religion, *generally*, or that our bleſſed Saviour is not the proper object of them. The ſtrain of our Ob-

* Rom. xii. 1.

jector's language, no leſs than the objections themſelves which he has urged, render it evident that (perhaps without excluding the latter poſition) the former is in full poſſeſſion of his mind.

This notion of the affections being out of place in Religion, is indeed an opinion which appears to be generally prevalent. The affections are regarded as the ſtrong-holds of enthuſiaſm. It is therefore judged moſt expedient to act, as prudent generals are uſed to do, when they raze the fortreſs, or ſpike up the cannon, which are likely to fall into the hands of an enemy. Mankind are apt to be the dupes of miſapplied terms; and the progreſs of the perſuaſion now in queſtion, has been conſiderably aided by an abuſe of language, not ſufficiently checked in its firſt advances, whereby that ſpecies of Religion which is oppoſite to the warm and affectionate kind, has been ſuffered almoſt without diſturbance, to uſurp to itſelf the epithet of *rational*. But let not this claim be too haſtily admitted. Let the poſition in queſtion be thoroughly and impartially diſcuſſed, and it will appear, if I miſtake not, to be a groſs and pernicious error. If amputation be indeed indiſpenſable, we muſt ſubmit to it; but we may ſurely expect to be heard with patience, or rather with favour and indulgence, while we proceed to ſhew that there is no need to have recourſe to ſo deſperate an enemy. The diſcuſſion will neceſſarily draw us into length. But our prolixity will not be greater than may well be claimed by the importance of the ſubject, eſpecially as it ſcarcely ſeems to have hitherto ſufficiently engaged the attention of writers on the ſubject of Religion.

It

It cannot methinks but afford a conſiderable preſumption againſt the doctrine which we are about to combat, that it propoſes to exclude at once from the ſervice of Religion ſo grand a part of the compoſition of man; that in this our nobleſt employment it condemns as worſe than uſeleſs, all the moſt active and operative principles of our nature. One cannot but ſuppoſe that like the organs of the body, ſo the elementary qualities and original paſſions of the mind were all given us for valuable purpoſes by our all-wiſe Creator. It is indeed one of the ſad evidences of our fallen condition, that they are now perpetually tumultuating and rebelling againſt the powers of reaſon and conſcience, to which they ſhould be ſubject. But even if Revelation had been ſilent, natural reaſon might have in ſome degree preſumed, that it would be the effect of a Religion which ſhould come from God, completely to repair the conſequences of our ſuperinduced depravity. The ſchemes of mere human wiſdom had indeed tacitly confeſſed, that this was a taſk beyond their ſtrength. Of the two moſt celebrated ſyſtems of philoſophy, the one expreſsly confirmed the uſurpation of the paſſions, while the other, deſpairing of being able to regulate, ſaw nothing left but to extinguiſh them. The former acted like a weak government, which gives independence to a rebellious province, which it cannot reduce. The latter formed its boaſted ſcheme merely upon the plan of that barbarous policy, which compoſes the troubles of a turbulent land by the extermination of its inhabitants. This is the calm, not of order, but of inaction; it is not tranquillity, but the ſtillneſs of death;

Trucidare falſo nomine imperium, & ubi ſolitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant—

Chriſtianity,

Chriſtianity, we might hope, would not be driven to any ſuch wretched expedients; nor in fact does ſhe condeſcend to them. They only thus undervalue her ſtrength, who miſtake her character, and are ignorant of her powers. It is her peculiar glory, and her main office, to bring all the faculties of our nature into their juſt ſubordination and dependence; that ſo the whole man, complete in all his functions, may be reſtored to the true ends of his being, and be devoted, entire and harmonious, to the ſervice and glory of God. "My ſon, give me thine *heart*"—"Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all "thy *heart*:"—Such are the direct and comprehenſive claims which are made on us in the holy Scriptures. We can ſcarcely indeed look into any part of the ſacred volume without meeting abundant proofs, that it is the religion of the Affections which God particularly requires. Love, Zeal, Gratitude, Joy, Hope, Truſt, are each of them ſpecified; and are not allowed to us as weakneſſes, but enjoined on us as our bounden duty, and commended to us as our acceptable worſhip. Where paſſages are ſo numerous, there would be no end of particular citations. Let it be ſufficient therefore, to refer the reader to the word of God. There let him obſerve too, that as the lively exerciſe of the paſſions towards their legitimate object, is always ſpoken of with praiſe, ſo a cold, hard, unfeeling heart is repreſented as highly criminal. Lukewarmneſs is ſtated to be the object of God's diſguſt and averſion; zeal and love, of his favour and delight; and the taking away of the heart of ſtone and the implanting of a warmer and more tender nature in its ſtead, is ſpecifically promiſed as the effect of his returning favour,

and

and the work of his renewing grace. It is the prayer of an inſpired teacher, in behalf of thoſe for whom he was moſt intereſted, "that their "love" (already acknowledged to be great) "might abound yet more and more:" Thoſe modes of worſhip are ſet forth and preſcribed, which are beſt calculated to excite the dormant affections, and to maintain them in lively exerciſe; and the aids of muſic and ſinging are expreſsly ſuperadded to increaſe their effect. If we look to the moſt eminent of the Scripture Characters, we ſhall find them warm, zealous, and affectionate. When engaged in their favourite work of celebrating the goodneſs of their Supreme Benefactor, their ſouls appear to burn within them, their hearts kindle into rapture; the powers of language are inadequate to the expreſſion of their tranſports; and they call on all nature to ſwell the chorus, and to unite with them in hallelujahs of gratitude, and joy, and praiſe. The man after God's own heart moſt of all abounds in theſe glowing effuſions; and his compoſitions appear to have been given us in order to ſet the tone, as it were, to all ſucceeding generations. Accordingly (to quote the words of a late excellent prelate *, who was himſelf warmed with the ſame heavenly flame) "in the "language of this divine book, the praiſes of "the church have been offered up to the Throne "of Grace from age to age." Again, when it pleaſed God to check the future apoſtle of the Gentiles in his wild career, and to make him a monument of transforming grace; was the force of his affections diminiſhed, or was it not only that their direction was changed? He brought

* Dr. Horne.

his

his affections entire and unabated into the ſervice of his bleſſed Maſter. His zeal now burned even with an increaſe of brightneſs; and no intenſeneſs, no continuance of ſuffering could allay its ardor, or damp the fervors of his triumphant exultations. Finally—The worſhip and ſervice of the glorified ſpirits in Heaven, is not repreſented to us a cold intellectual inveſtigation, but as the worſhip and ſervice of gratitude and love. And ſurely it will not be diſputed, that it ſhould be even here the humble endeavour of thoſe, who are promiſed while on earth "to be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the "ſaints in light," to bring their hearts into a capacity for joining in thoſe everlaſting praiſes.

BUT it may not be unadviſable for the writer here to guard againſt a miſtaken ſuppoſition, from which the mind of our Objector by no means appears exempt, that the force of the religious affections is to be mainly eſtimated (I had almoſt ſaid by the thermometer) by the degree of mere animal fervor, by ardors, and tranſports, and raptures, of which, from conſtitutional temperament, a perſon may be eaſily ſuſceptible; or into which daily experience muſt convince us, that people of ſtrong conceptions and of warm paſſions may work themſelves without much difficulty, where their hearts are by no means truly or deeply intereſted. Every tolerable actor can atteſt the truth of this remark. Theſe high degrees of the paſſions bad men may experience, good men may want. They may be affected; they may be genuine; but whether genuine or affected, they form not the true ſtandard by which the real nature or ſtrength of the religious affections is to be determined. To aſcertain theſe points, we muſt examine, whether they

appear

appear to be grounded in knowledge, to have their root in ſtrong and juſt conceptions of the great and manifold excellences of their object, or to be ignorant, unmeaning, or vague: whether they are natural and eaſy, or conſtrained and forced; wakeful and apt to fix on their great objects, delighting in their proper nutriment (if the expreſſion may be allowed) the exerciſes of prayer and praiſe, and religious contemplation; or voluntarily omitting offered occaſions of receiving it, looking forward to them with little expectation, looking back on them with little complacency, and being diſappointed of them with little regret: by obſerving whether theſe religious affections are merely occaſional viſitants, or the abiding inmates of the ſoul: whether they have got the maſtery over the vicious paſſions and propenſities, with which in their origin, and nature, and tendency, they are at open variance; or whether if the victory be not yet complete, the war is at leaſt conſtant, and the breach irreconcilable: whether they moderate and regulate all the inferior appetites and deſires which are culpable only in their exceſs, thus ſtriving to reign in the boſom with a ſettled undiſputed predominance: by examining, whether above all they manifeſt themſelves by prompting to the active diſcharge of the duties of life, the perſonal, and domeſtic, and relative, and profeſſional, and ſocial, and civil duties. Here the wideneſs of their range and the univerſality of their influence, will generally ſerve to diſtinguiſh them from thoſe partial efforts of diligence and ſelf-denial, to which mankind are prompted by ſubordinate motives. All proofs other than this deduced from conduct, are in ſome degree ambiguous. This, this only, whether

whether we argue from Reaſon or from Scripture, is a ſure infallible criterion. From the daily incidents of conjugal and domeſtic life, we learn that a heat of affection occaſionally vehement, but ſuperficial and tranſitory, may conſiſt too well with a courſe of conduct, exhibiting inconteſtable proofs of neglect and unkindneſs. But the paſſion, which alone the Holy Scriptures dignify with the name of Love, is a deep, not a ſuperficial feeling; a fixed and permanent, not an occaſional emotion. It proves the validity of its title, by actions correſponding with its nature, by practical endeavours to gratify the wiſhes and to promote the intereſts of the object of affection. "If a man love me, he will keep my "ſayings." "This is the love of God, that "we keep his commandments." This therefore is the beſt ſtandard by which to try the quality, or, the quality being aſcertained, to eſtimate the ſtrength of the religious affections. Without ſuffering ourſelves to derive too much complacency from tranſient fervors of devotion, we ſhould carefully and frequently prove ourſelves by this leſs dubitable teſt; impartially examining our daily conduct; and often comparing our actual, with our poſſible ſervices, the fair amount of our exertions, with our natural or acquired means and opportunities of uſefulneſs.

After this large explanation, the prolixity of which will we truſt be pardoned on account of the importance of the ſubject, and the danger of miſtakes both on the right hand and on the left, we are perfectly ready to concede to the objector, whoſe arguments we have ſo long been conſidering, that the religious affections muſt be expected to be more or leſs lively in different men, and in the ſame man at different times, in proportion

proportion to natural tempers, ages, ſituations, and habits of life. But, to found an objection on this ground, would be as unreaſonable as it were altogether to deny the obligation of the precepts, which command us to relieve the neceſſities of the indigent, becauſe the infinitely varying circumſtances of mankind muſt render it impoſſible to ſpecify beforehand the ſum which each individual ought on the whole to allot to this purpoſe, or to fix in every particular inſtance, on any determinate meaſure, and mode of contribution. To the one caſe no leſs than to the other, we may apply the maxim of an eminent writer; "An honeſt heart is the beſt "caſuiſt." He who every where but in Religion is warm and animated, there only phlegmatic and cold, can hardly expect (eſpecially if this coldneſs be not the ſubject of unfeigned humiliation and ſorrow) that his plea on the ground of natural temper ſhould be admitted; any more than that of a perſon who ſhould urge his poverty as a juſtification of his not relieving the wants of the neceſſitous, at the very time that he ſhould be launching out into expence without reſtraint, on occaſions in which he ſhould be really prompted by his inclinations. In both caſes, "it is the *willing* mind which is "required." Where that is found "every man "will be judged according to what he hath, "and not according to what he hath not *."

After the deciſive proofs already adduced from the word of God, of the unreaſonableneſs of the objection to the admiſſion of the paſſions into Religion, all farther arguments may appear ſuperfluous to any one who is diſpoſed to bow to

* 2 Cor. viii. 12.

ſcriptural

ſcriptural authority. Yet the point is of ſo much importance, and it is to be feared, ſo little regarded, that it may not be amiſs to continue the diſcuſſion. The beſt reſults of our underſtanding will be ſhewn to fall in with what clearly appears to be the authoritative language of revelation; and to call in the aid of the affections to the ſervice of Religion, will prove to be not only what ſober reaſon may permit, as in ſome ſort allowable; but to be that which ſhe clearly and ſtrongly dictates to our deliberate judgments, as being what the circumſtances of our natural condition indiſpenſably require. We have every one of us a work to accompliſh, wherein our eternal intereſts are at ſtake; a work to which we are naturally indiſpoſed. We live in a world abounding with objects which diſtract our attention and divert our endeavours; and a deadly enemy is ever at hand to ſeduce and beguile us. If we perſevere indeed, ſucceſs is certain; but our efforts muſt know no remiſſion. There is a call on us for vigorous and continual reſolution, ſelf-denial, and activity. Now, man is not a being of mere intellect.

Video meliora proboque, deteriora ſequor,

is a complaint which, alas! we all of us might daily utter. The ſlighteſt ſolicitation of appetite is often able to draw us to act in oppoſition to our cleareſt judgment, our higheſt intereſts, and moſt reſolute determinations. Sickneſs, poverty, diſgrace, and even eternal miſery itſelf, ſometimes in vain ſolicit our regards; they are all excluded from the view, and thruſt as it were beyond the ſphere of viſion, by ſome poor unſubſtantial tranſient object, ſo minute and contemptible as almoſt to eſcape the notice of the eye of reaſon.

Theſe

Theſe obſervations are more ſtrikingly confirmed in our religious concerns than in any other; becauſe in them the intereſts at ſtake are of tranſcendant importance: but they hold equally in every inſtance according to its meaſure, wherein there is a call for laborious, painful, and continued exertions, from which any one is likely to be deterred by obſtacles, or ſeduced by the ſolicitations of pleaſure. What then is to be done in the caſe of any ſuch arduous and neceſſary undertaking? The anſwer is obvious—You ſhould endeavour not only to convince the underſtanding, but alſo to affect the heart; and for this end, you muſt ſecure the reinforcement of the paſſions. This is indeed the courſe which would be naturally followed by every man of common underſtanding, who ſhould know that ſome one for whom he was deeply intereſted, a child, for inſtance, or a brother, were about to enter on a long, difficult, perilous, and critical adventure, wherein ſucceſs was to be honour and affluence; defeat was to be contempt and ruin. And ſtill more, if the parent were convinced that his child poſſeſſed faculties which, ſtrenuouſly and unremittingly exerted, would prove equal to all the exigences of the enterprize, but knew him alſo to be volatile and inconſtant, and had reaſon to doubt his reſolution and his vigilance; how would the friendly monitor's endeavour be redoubled, ſo to poſſeſs his pupil's mind with the worth and dignity of the undertaking, that there ſhould be no opening for the entrance of any inferior conſideration!—"Weigh well (he would ſay) the "value of the object for which you are about to "contend, and contemplate and ſtudy its vari-"ous excellences, till your whole ſoul be on fire

"for

" for its acquiſition. Conſider too, that, if you " fail, miſery and infamy are united in the al- " ternative which awaits you. Let not the miſ- " taken notion of its being a ſafe and eaſy ſer- " vice, for a moment beguile you into the diſ- " continuance or remiſſion of your efforts. Be " aware of your imminent danger, and at the " ſame time know your true ſecurity. It is a " ſervice of labour and peril; but one wherein " the powers which you poſſeſs, ſtrenuouſly and " perſeveringly exerted, cannot but crown you " with victory. Accuſtom yourſelf to look firſt " to the dreadful conſequences of failure; then " fix your eye on the glorious prize which is be- " fore you; and when your ſtrength begins to " fail, and your ſpirits are well nigh exhauſted, " let the animating view rekindle your reſolu- " tion, and call forth in renewed vigour the " fainting energies of your ſoul."

It was the remark of an unerring obſerver, " The children of this world are wiſer in their " generation than the children of light." And it is indiſputably true, that in religion we have to argue and plead with men for principles of action, the wiſdom and expediency of which are univerſally acknowledged in matters of worldly concern. So it is in the inſtance before us. The caſe which has been juſt deſcribed, is an exact, but a faint repreſentation of our condition in this life. Frail and " infirm of purpoſe," we have a buſineſs to execute of ſupreme and indiſpenſable neceſſity. Solicitations to neglect it every where abound: the difficulties and dangers are numerous and urgent; and the night of death cometh, how ſoon we know not, " when no man can work." All this is granted. It ſeems to be a ſtate of things wherein one

ſhould

ſhould look out with ſolicitude for ſome powerful ſtimulants. Mere knowledge is confeſſedly too weak. The affections alone remain to ſupply the deficiency. They preciſely meet the occaſion, and ſuit the purpoſes intended. Yet, when we propoſe to fit ourſelves for our great undertaking, by calling them in to our help, we are to be told that we are acting contrary to reaſon. Is this reaſonable, to ſtrip us firſt of our armour of proof, and then to ſend us to the ſharpeſt of encounters? To ſummon us to the ſevereſt labours, but firſt to rob us of the precious cordials which ſhould brace our ſinews and recruit our ſtrength?

Let theſe pretended advocates for reaſon at length then confeſs their folly, and do juſtice to the ſuperior wiſdom as well as goodneſs of our heavenly Inſtructor, who better underſtanding our true condition, and knowing our frowardneſs and inadvertency, has moſt reaſonably as well as kindly pointed out and enjoined on us the uſe of thoſe aids which may counteract our infirmities; who commanding the effect, has commanded alſo the means whereby it may be accompliſhed.

And now, if the uſe of the affections in religion, in *general*, be at length ſhewn to be conformable to reaſon, it will not require many words to prove that our bleſſed Saviour is the proper object of them. We know that love, gratitude, joy, hope, truſt, (the affections in queſtion) have all their appropriate objects. Now it muſt be at once conceded, that if theſe appropriate objects be not exhibited, it is perfectly unreaſonable to expect that the correſpondent paſſions ſhould be excited. If we aſk for love, in the caſe of an object which has no excellence or deſirableneſs; for gratitude, where no obligation

tion has been conferred; for joy, where there is no juſt cauſe of ſelf-congratulation; for hope, where nothing is expected; for truſt, where there exiſts no ground of reliance; then indeed, we muſt kiſs the rod, and patiently ſubmit to correction. This would be indeed Egyptian bondage, to demand the effects without the means of producing them. Is the caſe then ſo? Are we ready to adopt the language of the avowed enemies of our adorable Saviour; and again to ſay of him "in whom dwelleth all the fulneſs of "the Godhead bodily," that "he hath no form "nor comelineſs; and when we ſhall ſee him, "there is no beauty that we ſhould deſire "him *?" Is it no obligation, that he who "thought it not robbery to be equal with God," ſhould yet for our ſakes "make himſelf of no "reputation, and take upon him the form of a "ſervant, and be made in the likeneſs of men; "and humble himſelf, and become obedient unto "death, even the death of the croſs †?" Is it no cauſe of "*joy*, that to us is born a Sa-"viour ‡", by whom we may "be delivered "from the power of darkneſs; and be made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the "ſaints in light §?" Can there be a "*hope* compa-"rable to that of our calling ‖"—"Which is "Chriſt in us, the hope of glory ¶?" Can there be a *truſt* to be preferred to the reliance on "Chriſt Jeſus; who is the ſame yeſterday, to-"day, and for ever **?" Surely, if our Opponent be not dead to every generous emotion, he cannot look his own objection in the face, without a bluſh of ſhame and indignation.

* Iſaiah, liii. 2. † Philip. ii. 6, 7, 8. ‡ Luke, ii. 10, 11.
§ Col. i. 12, 13. ‖ Epheſ. i. 18. ¶ Col. i. 27.
** Heb. xiii. 8.

SECT.

SECTION III.

Conſideration of the Reaſonableneſs of Affections towards an inviſible Being.

BUT forced at laſt to retreat from his favourite poſition, and compelled to acknowledge that the religious affections towards our bleſſed Saviour are not unreaſonable; he ſtill however maintains the combat, ſuggeſting that by the very conſtitution of our nature, we are not ſuſceptible of them towards an inviſible Being; in whoſe caſe, it will be added, we are ſhut out from all thoſe means of communication and intercourſe, which knit and cement the union between man and man.

We mean not to deny that there is ſomething in this objection. It might even ſeem to plead the authority of Scripture in its favour—"He "that loveth not his brother whom he hath "ſeen, how can he love God whom he hath not "ſeen *?" And it was indeed no new remark in Horace's days,

> Segnius irritant animos demiſſa per aures,
> Quam quæ ſunt oculis ſubjecta fidelibus.

We receive impreſſions more readily from viſible objects, we feel them more ſtrongly, and retain them more durably. But though it muſt be granted that this circumſtance makes it a more difficult taſk to preſerve the affections in queſtion in a healthful and vigorous ſtate; is it thereby rendered impoſſible? This were indeed a moſt precipitate concluſion; and any one who ſhould be diſpoſed to admit the truth of it, might be at

* 1 John, iv. 20.

leaſt

leaſt induced to heſitate, when he ſhould reflect that the argument applies equally againſt the poſſibility of the love of God, a duty of which the moſt curſory reader of Scripture, if he admit its divine authority, cannot but acknowledge the indiſpenſable obligation. But we need only look back to the Scripture proofs which have been lately adduced, to be convinced that the religious affections are therein inculcated on us, as a matter of high and ſerious obligation. Hence we may be aſſured that the impoſſibility ſtated by our Opponent does not exiſt.

Let us ſcrutinize this matter, however, a little more minutely, and we ſhall be compelled to acknowledge, though the concluſion may make againſt ourſelves, that the objection vaniſhes when we fairly and accurately inveſtigate the circumſtances of the caſe. With this view, let us look a little into the nature of the affections of the human mind, and endeavour to aſcertain whence it is that they derive their nutriment, and are found from experience to increaſe in ſtrength.

The ſtate of man is ſuch, that his feelings are not the obedient ſervants of his reaſon, prompt at once to follow its dictates, as to their direction, and their meaſure. Excellence is the juſt object of love; good in expectancy, of hope; evil to be apprehended, of fear; our fellow creatures' misfortunes, and ſufferings, conſtitute the juſt objects of pity. Each of theſe paſſions, it might be thought, would be excited, in proportion to what our reaſon ſhould inform us were the magnitude and conſequent claims of its correſponding object. But this is by no means the caſe. Take firſt for a proof the inſtance of pity. We read of ſlaughtered thouſands with

leſs

leſs emotion, than we hear the particulars of a ſhocking accident which has happened in the next ſtreet; the diſtreſſes of a novel, which at the ſame time we know to be fictitious, affect us more than the dry narrative of a battle. We become ſo much intereſted by theſe incidents of the imagination (aware all the while that they are merely ſuch) that we cannot ſpeedily baniſh them from our thoughts, nor recover the tone of our minds; and often, we ſcarcely bring ourſelves to lay down our book at the call of real misfortune, of which we go perhaps to the relief, on a principle of duty, but with little ſenſe of intereſt or emotion of tenderneſs. It were eaſy to ſhew that it is much the ſame in the caſe of the other affections. Whatever be the cauſe of this diſproportion, which (as metaphyſics fall not within our province) we ſhall not ſtop to examine, the fact is undeniable. There appears naturally to be a certain ſtrangeneſs between the paſſion and its object, which familiarity and the power of habit muſt gradually overcome. You muſt contrive to bring them into *cloſe contact*; they muſt be jointed and glued together by the particularities of little incidents. Thus in the production of heat in the phyſical world, the flint and the ſteel produce not the effect without colliſion; the rudeſt Barbarian will tell us the neceſſity of attrition, and the chemiſt of mixture. Now, an object, it is admitted, is brought into *cloſer contact* with its correſponding paſſion, by being ſeen and converſed with. This we grant is one way; but does it follow that there is no other? To aſſert this, would be ſomething like maintaining, in contradiction to univerſal experience, that objects of viſion alone are capable of attracting our regard. But nothing can be more unfounded

than ſuch a ſuppoſition. It might appear to be too nearly approaching to the ludicrous, to ſuggeſt as an example to the contrary, the metaphyſician's attachment to his inſubſtantial ſpeculations, or the zeal diſplayed in the purſuit,

Extra flammantia mœnia mundi,

of abſtract ſciences, where there is no idea of bringing them "within the viſible diurnal ſphere" to the vulgarity of practical application. The inſtance of the novel before-mentioned, proves, that we may be extremely affected by what we know to be merely ideal incidents and beings. By much thinking or talking of any one; by uſing our minds to dwell on his excellences; by placing him in imaginary ſituations which intereſt and affect us; we find ourſelves becoming inſenſibly more and more attached to him: whereas it is the ſureſt expedient for extinguiſhing an attachment which already exiſts, to engage in ſuch occupations or ſociety, as may cauſe our caſual thoughts and more fixed meditations to be diverted from the object of it. Aſk a mother who has been long ſeparated from her child, eſpecially if he has been in circumſtances of honour, or of danger, to draw her attention to him, and to keep it in wakefulneſs and exerciſe, and ſhe will tell you, that ſo far from becoming leſs dear, he appears to have grown more the object of her affections. She ſeems to herſelf to love him even better than the child who has been living under her roof, and has been daily in her view. How does ſhe rejoice in his good fortune, and weep over his diſtreſſes! With what impatience does ſhe anticipate the time of his return!

We find therefore that ſight and perſonal intercourſe do not ſeem neceſſary to the production

tion or increaſe of attachment, where the means of *cloſe contact* have been afforded; but on the other hand, if an object have been prevented from coming into *cloſe contact*, ſight and perſonal intercourſe are not ſufficient to give it the power of exciting the affections in proportion to its real magnitude. Suppoſe the caſe of a perſon whom we have often ſeen, and may have occaſionally converſed with, and of whom we have been told in the general, that he poſſeſſes extraordinary merits. We aſſent to the aſſertion. But if we have no knowledge of particulars, no cloſe acquaintance with him, nothing in ſhort which brings his merits home to us, they intereſt us leſs than what we know to be a far inferior degree of the very ſame qualities in one of our common aſſociates. A parent has ſeveral children, all conſtantly under his eye, and equally dear to him. Yet if any one of them be taken ill, it is brought into ſo much *cloſer contact* than before, that it ſeems to abſorb and engroſs the parent's whole affection. Thus then, though it will not be denied that an object by being viſible may thereby excite its correſponding affection with more facility; yet this is manifeſtly far from being the prime conſideration. And ſo far are we from being the ſlaves of the ſenſe of viſion, that a familiar acquaintance with the intrinſic excellences of an object, aided, it muſt be admitted, by the power of habit, will render us almoſt inſenſible to the impreſſions which its outward form conveys, and able entirely to loſe the conſciouſneſs of an unſightly exterior.

We may be permitted to remark, that the foregoing obſervations furniſh an explanation, leſs diſcreditable than that which has been ſometimes given, of an undoubted phænomenon in

the human mind, that the greateſt public miſfortunes, however the underſtanding may lecture, are apt really to affect our feelings leſs than the moſt trivial diſaſter which happens to ourſelves. An eminent writer *(a)* ſcarcely overſtated the point when he obſerved, "that "it would occaſion a man of humanity more "real diſturbance to know that he was the next "morning to loſe his little finger, than to hear "that the great empire of China had been ſud-"denly ſwallowed up by an earthquake. The "thoughts of the former, would keep him awake "all night; in the latter caſe, after making "many melancholy reflections on the precari-"ouſneſs of human life, and the vanity of all "the labours of man which could be thus anni-"hilated in a moment; after a little ſpeculation "too perhaps on the cauſes of the diſaſter, and "its effects in the political and commercial "world; he would purſue his buſineſs or his "pleaſure with the ſame eaſe and tranquillity as "if no ſuch accident had happened; and ſnore "at night with the moſt profound ſerenity over "the ruin of a hundred million of his fellow "creatures. Selfiſhneſs is not the cauſe of this, "for the moſt unfeeling brute on earth would "ſurely think nothing of the loſs of a finger, "if he could thereby prevent ſo dreadful a ca-"lamity." This doctrine of *contact* which has been opened above, affords a ſatisfactory ſolution; and from all which has been ſaid (the writer has reaſon perhaps to apologize for the length of the diſcuſſion) the circumſtances, by which the affections of the mind towards any particular object are generated and ſtrengthened,

(a) Dr. Adam Smith. Vide Theory of Moral Sentiments.

may

may be eaſily collected. The chief of theſe appear to be, whatever tends to give a diſtinct and lively impreſſion of the object, by ſetting before us its minute parts, and by often drawing towards it the thoughts and affections, ſo as to inveſt it by degrees with a confirmed aſcendency: whatever tends to excite and to keep in exerciſe a lively intereſt in its behalf: in other words; full knowledge, diſtinct and frequent mental entertainment, and pathetic contemplations. Suppoſing theſe means to have been uſed in any given degree, it may be expected, that they will be more or leſs efficacious, in proportion as the intrinſic qualities of the object afford greater or leſs ſcope for their operation, and more or fewer materials with which to work. Can it then be conceived, that they will be of no avail when ſteadily practiſed in the caſe of our Redeemer! If the principles of love, and gratitude, and joy, and hope, and truſt, are not utterly extinct within us, they cannot but be called forth by the various correſponding objects which that bleſſed contemplation would gradually bring forth to our view. Well might the language of the apoſtle be addreſſed to Chriſtians, "Whom having *not* "*ſeen* ye love; in whom, though now ye *ſee* "*him not*, yet believing, ye *rejoice* with joy un- "ſpeakable, and full of glory *."

But freſh conſiderations pour in to render in this inſtance, the plea of its being impoſſible to love an inviſible being, ſtill more invalid. Our bleſſed Saviour, if we may be permitted ſo to ſay, is not removed far from us; and the various relations in which we ſtand towards him, ſeem purpoſely made known to us, in order to

* 1 Pet. i. 8.

furniſh

furniſh ſo many different bonds of connection with him, and conſequent occaſions of continual intercourſe. He exhibits not himſelf to us "dark with exceſſive brightneſs," but is let down as it were to the poſſibilities of human converſe. We may not think that he is incapable of entering into our little concerns, and ſympathizing with them; for we are graciouſly aſſured that he is not one "who cannot be touched "with the feeling of our infirmities, having "been in all points tempted like as we are *." The figures under which he is repreſented, are ſuch as convey ideas of the utmoſt tenderneſs. "He ſhall feed his flock like a ſhepherd; he "ſhall gather the lambs in his arm, and carry "them in his boſom, and ſhall gently lead thoſe "that are with young †."—"They ſhall not "hunger nor thirſt, neither ſhall the heat nor "ſun ſmite them; for he that hath mercy on "them, ſhall lead them, even by the ſprings "of water ſhall he guide them ‡." "I will "not leave you orphans *(a)*" was one of his laſt conſolatory declarations §. The children of Chriſt are here ſeparated indeed from the perſonal view of him; but not from his paternal affection and paternal care. Meanwhile let them quicken their regards by the animating anticipation of that bleſſed day, when he "who is gone "to prepare a place for them, will come again "to receive them unto himſelf." Then ſhall they be admitted to his more immediate preſence: "Now we ſee through a glaſs darkly;

*-Heb. iv. 15. † Iſaiah, xl. 11. ‡ Iſaiah, xlix. 10.

(a) The word Comfortleſs is rendered in the margin Orphans.

§ John, xiv. 18.

"but

" but then face to face: now I know in part;
" but then ſhall I know, even as I am known *."

Surely more than enough has been now ſaid to prove that this particular caſe, from its very nature, furniſhes the moſt abundant and powerful conſiderations and means for exciting the feelings; and it might be contended, without fear of refutation, that by the diligent and habitual uſe of thoſe conſiderations and means, we might with confident expectation of ſucceſs, engage in the work of raiſing our affections towards our bleſſed Saviour to a ſtate of due force and activity. But, bleſſed be God, we have a ſtill better reliance; for the grand circumſtance of all yet remains behind, which the writer has been led to defer, from his wiſh to contend with his opponents on their own ground. This circumſtance is, that here, no leſs than in other particulars, the Chriſtian's hope is founded, not on the ſpeculations or the ſtrength of man, but on the declaration of Him who cannot lie, on the power of Omnipotence.

We learn from the Scriptures that it is one main part of the operations of the Holy Spirit, to implant theſe heavenly principles in the human mind, and to cheriſh their growth. We are encouraged to believe that in anſwer to our prayers, this aid from above will give efficacy to our earneſt endeavours, if uſed in humble dependence on divine grace. We may therefore with confidence take the means which have been ſuggeſted. But let us, in our turn, be permitted to aſk our opponents, have *they* humbly and perſeveringly applied for this divine ſtrength? or diſclaiming that aſſiſtance, perhaps as tempting

* 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

them

them to indolence, have they been ſo much the more ſtrenuous and unwearied in the uſe of their own unaided endeavours? or rather have they not been equally negligent of both? Renouncing the one, they have wholly omitted the other. But this is far from being all. They even reverſe all the methods which we have recommended as being calculated to increaſe regard; and exactly follow that courſe which would be purſued by any one who ſhould wiſh to reduce an exceſſive affection. Yet thus leaving untried all the means, which, whether from Reaſon or Scripture, we maintain to be neceſſary to the production of the end, nay uſing ſuch as are of a directly oppoſite nature, theſe men preſume to talk to us of impoſſibilities! We may rather contend that they furniſh a freſh proof of the ſoundneſs of our reaſonings. We lay it down as a fundamental poſition, that ſpeculative knowledge alone, that mere ſuperficial curſory conſiderations, will be of no avail. Nothing is to be done without the diligent continued uſe of the appointed method. They themſelves afford an inſtance of the truth of our aſſertions; and while they ſupply no argument againſt the efficacy of the mode preſcribed, they acknowledge at leaſt that they are wholly ignorant of any other.

But let us now turn our eyes to Chriſtians of a higher order, to thoſe who have actually proved the truth of our reaſonings; who have not only aſſumed the name, but who have poſſeſſed the ſubſtance, and felt the power of Chriſtianity; who though often foiled by their remaining corruptions, and ſhamed and caſt down under a ſenſe of their many imperfections, have known in their better ſeaſons, what it was to experience its

its firm hope, its dignified joy, its unſhaken truſt, its more than human conſolations. In their hearts, love alſo towards their Redeemer has glowed; a love not *ſuperficial* and unmeaning (think not that this would be the ſubject of our praiſe) but conſtant and rational, reſulting from a ſtrong impreſſion of the worth of its object, and heightened by an abiding ſenſe of great, unmerited, and continually accumulating obligations; ever manifeſting itſelf in acts of diligent obedience, or of patient ſuffering. Such was the religion of the holy martyrs of the ſixteenth century, the illuſtrious ornaments of the Engliſh church. They realized the theory which we have now been faintly tracing. Look to their writings, and you will find that their thoughts and affections had been much exerciſed in habitual views of the bleſſed Jeſus. Thus they uſed the required *means*. What were the *effects?* Perſecution and diſtreſs, degradation and contempt in vain aſſailed them—all theſe evils ſerved but to bring their affections into *cloſer contact* with their object; and not only did their love feel no diminution or abatement, but it roſe to all the exigencies of the occaſion, and burned with an increaſe of ardor; and when brought forth at laſt to a cruel and ignominious death, they repined not at their fate; but rather rejoiced that they were counted worthy to ſuffer for the name of Chriſt. By the bleſſing of God the writer might refer to ſtill more recent times. But leſt his authorities ſhould be diſputed, let us go to the Apoſtles of our Lord; and while, on a very curſory peruſal of their writings, we muſt acknowledge that they commend and even preſcribe to us the love of Chriſt, as one of the chief of the Chriſtian graces; ſo on a more attentive inſpecti-

on of thoſe writings, we ſhall diſcover abundant proofs that they were themſelves bright examples of their own precept; that our bleſſed Saviour was really the object of their warmeſt affection, and what he had done and ſuffered for them the continual matter of their grateful remembrance.

The diſpoſition ſo prevalent in the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, to form a religious ſyſtem for themſelves, inſtead of taking it from the word of God, is ſtrikingly obſervable in their ſcarcely admitting, except in the moſt vague and general ſenſe, the doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit. If we look into the Scriptures for information on this particular, we learn a very different leſſon. We are in them diſtinctly taught, that "of ourſelves we can do nothing;" that "we are by nature children of wrath," and under the power of the evil ſpirit, our underſtandings being naturally dark, and our hearts averſe from ſpiritual things; and we are directed to pray for the influence of the Holy Spirit to enlighten our underſtandings, to diſſipate our prejudices, to purify our corrupt minds, and to renew us after the image of our heavenly Father. It is this influence which is repreſented as originally awakening us from ſlumber, as enlightening us in darkneſs, as "quickening us when "dead *," as "delivering us from the power of "the devil," as drawing us to God, as "tranſlating us into the kingdom of his dear Son †," as "creating us anew in Chriſt Jeſus ‡," as "dwelling in us, and walking in us §;" ſo that "putting off the old man with his deeds," we

* Eph. ii. 1. 5. † Col. i. 13. ‡ Epheſ. ii. 10.
§ 2 Cor. vi. 16.

are

are to conſider ourſelves as " having put on the new man, " which is renewed in knowledge " after the image of Him that created him *"; and as thoſe who are to be " an habitation of " God through the Spirit †." It is by this Divine aſſiſtance only that we can grow in Grace, and improve in all Holineſs. So expreſsly, particularly, and repeatedly does the word of God inculcate theſe leſſons, that one would think there were ſcarcely room for any difference of opinion among thoſe who admit its authority. Sometimes *(a)* the whole of a Chriſtian's repentance and faith, and conſequent holineſs, are aſcribed *generally* to the Divine influence; ſometimes theſe are ſpoken of ſeparately, and aſcribed to the ſame Almighty power, Sometimes different particular graces of the Chriſtian character, thoſe which reſpect our duties and tempers towards our fellow-creatures, no leſs than thoſe which have reference to the Supreme Being, are particularly traced to this ſource. Sometimes they are all referred collectively to this common root, being comprehended under the compendious denomination of " the Fruits of the Spirit." In exact correſpondence with theſe repreſentations, this aid from above is promiſed in other parts of Scripture for the production of thoſe effects; and the withholding or withdrawing of it is occaſionally threatened as a puniſhment for the ſins of men, and as one of the moſt fatal conſequences of the Divine diſpleaſure.

The Liturgy of the church of England ſtrictly agrees with the repreſentation, which has been

* Col. iii. 9, 10. † Epheſ. ii. 22.

(a) Vide Dr. Doddridge's eight Sermons on Regeneration, a moſt valuable compilation; and M'Laurin's Eſſay on Divine Grace.

here

here given of the inſtructions of the word of God.

SECT. IV.

Inadequate conceptions entertained by nominal Chriſtians of the terms of acceptance with God.

IF then it be indeed as ſo has been now ſtated; that, in contradiction to the plaineſt dictates of Scripture, and to the ritual of our eſtabliſhed Church, the ſanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, the firſt fruits of our reconciliation to God, the purchaſe of our Redeemer's death, and his beſt gift to his true diſciples, are too generally undervalued and ſlighted; if it be alſo true, as was formerly proved, that our thoughts of the bleſſed Saviour are confuſed and faint, our affections towards him languid and lukewarm, little proportioned to what they, who at ſuch a price have been reſcued from ruin, and endowed with a title to eternal glory, might be juſtly expected to feel towards the Author of their deliverance; little proportioned to what has been felt by others, ranſomed from the ſame ruin, and partakers of the ſame inheritance: if this, let it be repeated, be indeed ſo, let us not ſhut our eyes againſt the perception of our real ſtate; but rather endeavour to trace the evil to its ſource. We are loudly called on to *examine well our foundations*. If any thing be *there* unſound and hollow, the ſuperſtructure could not be ſafe, though its exterior were leſs ſuſpicious. Let the queſtion then be aſked, and let the anſwer be returned with all the conſideration and ſolemnity which a queſtion ſo important may juſtly demand, whether,

whether, in the grand concern of all, *the means of a ſinner's acceptance with God*, there be not reaſon to apprehend, that the nominal Chriſtians whom we have been addreſſing, too generally entertain very ſuperficial, and confuſed, and (to ſpeak in the ſofteſt terms) highly dangerous notions? Is there not cauſe to fear, that with little more than an indiſtinct and nominal reference to Him who "bore our ſins in his own body on the "tree," they really reſt their eternal hopes on a vague, general perſuaſion of the unqualified mercy of the Supreme Being; or that, ſtill more erroneouſly, they rely in the main, on their own negative or poſitive merits? "They can look "upon their lives with an impartial eye, and "congratulate themſelves on their inoffenſive-"neſs in ſociety; on their having been exempt, "at leaſt, from any groſs vice, or if ſometimes "accidentally betrayed into it, on its never hav-"ing been indulged habitually; or if not even "ſo" (for there are but few who can ſay this, if the term vice be explained according to the ſtrict requiſitions of the Goſpel) "yet on the balance "being in their favour, or on the whole not "much againſt them, when their good and bad "actions are fairly weighed, and due allowance "is made for human frailty." Theſe conſiderations are ſufficient for the moſt part to compoſe their apprehenſions; theſe are the cordials which they find moſt at hand in the moments of ſerious thought, or of occaſional dejection; and ſometimes perhaps in ſeaſons of leſs than ordinary ſelf-complacency, they call in alſo to their aid the general perſuaſion of the unbounded mercy and pity of God. Yet perſons of this deſcription by no means diſclaim a Saviour, or avowedly relinquiſh their title to a ſhare in the benefits of his

his death. They close their petitions with the name of Christ; but if not chiefly from the effect of habit, or out of decent conformity to the established faith, yet surely with something of the same ambiguity of principle which influenced the expiring philosopher, when he ordered the customary mark of homage to be paid to the god of medicine.

Others go farther than this; for there are many shades of difference between those who flatly renounce, and those who cordially embrace the doctrine of Redemption by Christ. This class has a sort of general, indeterminate, and ill understood dependence on our blessed Saviour. But their hopes, so far as they can be distinctly made out (for their views also are very obscure) appear ultimately to bottom on the persuasion that they are now, through Christ, become members of a new dispensation, wherein they will be tried by a more lenient rule than that to which they must have been otherwise subject. "God "will not now be extreme to mark what is done "amiss; but will dispense with the rigorous ex- "actions of his law, too strict indeed for such "frail creatures as we are to hope that we can "fulfil it. Christianity has moderated the re- "quisitions of Divine Justice; and all which is "now required of us, is thankfully to trust to "the merits of Christ for the pardon of our sins, "and the acceptance of our sincere though im- "perfect obedience. The frailties and infirmi- "ties to which our nature is liable, or to which "our situation in life exposes us, will not be se- "verely judged: and as it is practice that really "determines the character, we may rest satisfied, "that if on the whole our lives be tolerably good, "we shall escape with little or no punishment,

"and

" and through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, ſhall be " finally partakers of heavenly felicity."

We cannot dive into the human heart, and therefore ſhould always ſpeak with caution and diffidence, when from external appearances or declarations we are affirming the exiſtence of any internal principles and feelings; eſpecially as we are liable to be miſled by the ambiguities of language, or by the inaccuracy with which others may expreſs themſelves. But it is ſometimes not difficult to any one who is accuſtomed, if the phraſe may be allowed, to the anatomy of the human mind, to diſcern, that generally ſpeaking, the perſons who uſe the above language, rely not ſo much on the merits of Chriſt, and on the agency of Divine Grace, as on their own power of fulfilling the moderated requiſitions of Divine Juſtice. He will hence therefore diſcover in them a diſpoſition rather to extenuate the malignity of their diſeaſe, than to magnify the excellence of the proffered remedy. He will find them apt to palliate in themſelves what they cannot fully juſtify, to enhance the merit of what they believe to be their good qualities and commendable actions, to ſet as it were in an account the good againſt the bad; and if the reſult be not very unfavourable, they conceive that they ſhall be entitled to claim the benefits of our Saviour's ſufferings as a thing of courſe. They have little idea, ſo little, that it might almoſt be affirmed that they have no idea at all, of the importance or difficulty of the duty of what the Scripture calls " ſubmitting ourſelves to the " righteouſneſs of God;" or of our proneneſs rather to juſtify ourſelves in his ſight, than in the language of imploring penitents to acknowledge ourſelves guilty and helpleſs ſinners. They have

They have never ſummoned themſelves to this entire and unqualified renunciation of their own merits, and their own ſtrength; and therefore they remain ſtrangers to the natural loftineſs of the human heart, which ſuch a call would have awakened into action, and rouſed to reſiſtance. ALL THESE THEIR SEVERAL ERRORS NATURALLY RESULT FROM THE MISTAKEN CONCEPTION ENTERTAINED OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIANITY. They conſider not that Chriſtianity is a ſcheme for "juſtifying "*the ungodly* *," by Chriſt's dying for them "*when yet ſinners* † *(a)*;" a ſcheme "for reconciling us to God—*when enemies*;" and for making the fruits of holineſs *the effects* ‡, *not the cauſe*, of our being juſtified and reconciled: that, in ſhort, it opens freely the door of mercy, to the greateſt and vileſt of penitent ſinners; that obeying the bleſſed impulſe of the grace of God, whereby they had been awakened from the ſleep of death, and moved to ſeek for pardon, they might enter in, and through the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit might be enabled to bring forth the

* Rom. iv. 5. † Ibid. v. 6—8.

(a) The Writer truſts he cannot be miſunderſtood to mean that any, continuing ſinners and ungodly, can, by believing, be accepted or finally ſaved. The following chapter, particularly the latter part of it, (Section vi.) would abundantly vindicate him from any ſuch miſconſtruction. Meanwhile, he will only remark, that true faith (in which repentance is conſidered as involved) is in Scripture regarded as *the radical principle of holineſs*. If the root exiſt, the proper fruits will be brought forth. An attention to this conſideration would have eaſily explained and reconciled thoſe paſſages of St. Paul's and St. James's Epiſtles, which have furniſhed ſo much matter of argument and criticiſm. St. James, it may be obſerved, all along ſpeaks of a man, not who *has* faith, but who *ſays* that he has faith. Vide James ii. 14. &c. &c.

‡ Vide Note Ch. iv. Sect. vi.

fruits

fruits of Righteouſneſs. But they rather conceive of Chriſtianity as opening the door of mercy, that thoſe who on the ground of their own merits could not have hoped to juſtify themſelves before God, may yet be admitted for Chriſt's ſake, on condition of their having previouſly ſatisfied the moderated requiſitions of Divine Juſtice. In ſpeaking to others alſo of the Goſpel ſcheme, they are apt to talk too much of terms and performances on our part, on which we become entitled to an intereſt in the ſufferings of Chriſt; inſtead of ſtating the benefits of Chriſt's ſatisfaction as extended to us freely, "without money "and without price."

THE *practical* conſequences of theſe errors are ſuch as might be expected. They tend to prevent that ſenſe which we ought to entertain of our own natural miſery and helpleſsneſs; and that deep feeling of gratitude for the merits and interceſſion of Chriſt, to which we are wholly indebted for our reconciliation to God, and for the will and the power, from firſt to laſt, to work out our own ſalvation. They conſider it too much in the light of a contract between two parties, wherein each, independently of the other, has his own diſtinct condition to perform; man —to do his duty; God—to juſtify and accept for Chriſt's ſake: If they fail not in the diſcharge of their condition, aſſuredly the condition on God's part will be faithfully fulfilled. Accordingly, we find in fact, that they who repreſent the Goſpel ſcheme in the manner above deſcribed, give evidence of the ſubject with which their hearts are moſt filled, by their proneneſs to run into merely moral diſquiſitions, either not mentioning at all, or at leaſt but curſorily touching on the ſufferings and love of their Redeemer;

and

and are little apt to kindle at their Saviour's name, and like the apoſtles to be betrayed by their fervor into what may be almoſt an untimely deſcant on the riches of his unutterable mercy. In addreſſing others alſo whom they conceive to be living in habits of ſin, and under the wrath of God, they rather adviſe them to amend their ways as a preparation for their coming to Chriſt, than exhort them to throw themſelves with deep proſtration of ſoul at the foot of the croſs, there to obtain pardon and find grace to help in time of need.

The great importance of the ſubject in queſtion will juſtify our having been thus particular. It has ariſen from a wiſh that on a queſtion of ſuch magnitude, to miſtake our meaning ſhould be impoſſible. But after all which has been ſaid, let it alſo be remembered, that except ſo far as the inſtruction of others is concerned, the point of importance is, the internal diſpoſition of the mind; *where* the dependence for pardon, and for holineſs, is really placed; not what the language is, in which men expreſs themſelves. And it is to be hoped that he who ſearches the heart, ſees the right diſpoſitions in many who uſe the miſtaken and dangerous language to which we have objected.

If this ſo generally prevailing error concerning the nature of the Goſpel offer be in any conſiderable degree juſt; it will then explain that ſo generally prevailing languor in the affections towards our bleſſed Saviour which was formerly remarked, and that inadequate impreſſion of the neceſſity and value of the aſſiſtance of the divine Spirit. According to the ſoundeſt principles of reaſoning, it may be alſo adduced as an additional proof of the correctneſs of our preſent ſtatement,

that

that it ſo exactly falls in with thoſe phænomena, and ſo naturally accounts for them. For even admitting that the perſons above mentioned, particularly the laſt claſs, do at the bottom rely on the atonement of Chriſt; yet on their ſcheme, it muſt neceſſarily happen, that the object to which they are moſt accuſtomed to look, with which their thoughts are chiefly converſant, from which they moſt habitually derive complacency, is rather their own qualified merit and ſervices, though confeſſed to be inadequate, than the ſufferings and atoning death of a crucified Saviour. The affections towards our bleſſed Lord therefore (according to the theory of the paſſions formerly laid down) cannot be expected to flouriſh, becauſe they receive not that which was ſhewn to be neceſſary to their nutriment and growth. If we would love him as affectionately, and rejoice in him as triumphantly as the firſt Chriſtians did; we muſt learn like them to repoſe our entire truſt in him, and to adopt the language of the apoſtle, "God forbid that I "ſhould glory, ſave in the croſs of our Lord "Jeſus Chriſt *"—"Who of God is made unto "us wiſdom and righteouſneſs, and ſanctificati-"on, and redemption †."

Doubtleſs there have been too many who, to their eternal ruin, have abuſed the doctrine of Salvation by Grace; and have vainly truſted in Chriſt for pardon and acceptance, when by their vicious lives they have plainly proved the groundleſſneſs of their pretenſions. The tree is to be known by its fruits; and there is too much reaſon to fear that there is no principle of faith, when it does not decidedly evince itſelf by the fruits of holineſs.

* Gal. vi. 14. † 1 Cor. i. 30.

holineſs. Dreadful indeed will be the doom, above that of all others, of thoſe looſe profeſſors of Chriſtianity, to whom at the laſt day our bleſſed Saviour will addreſs thoſe words, "I ne-"ver knew you; depart from me, all ye that "work iniquity." But the danger of error on this ſide ought not to render us inſenſible to the oppoſite error; an error againſt which in theſe days it ſeems particularly neceſſary to guard. It is far from the intention of the writer of this work to enter into the niceties of controverſy. But ſurely without danger of being thought to violate this deſign, he may be permitted to contend, that they who in the main believe the doctrines of the church of England, are bound to allow that our dependence on our bleſſed Saviour, as alone the meritorious cauſe of our acceptance with God, and as the means of all its bleſſed fruits and glorious conſequences, muſt be not merely formal and nominal, but real and ſubſtantial: not vague, qualified, and partial, but direct, cordial, and entire. "Repentance to-"wards God, and faith towards our Lord Jeſus "Chriſt," was the ſum of the apoſtolical inſtructions. It is not an occaſional invocation of the name, or a tranſient recognition of the authority of Chriſt, that fills up the meaſure of the terms, *believing in Jeſus*. This we ſhall find no ſuch eaſy taſk; and if we truſt that we do believe, we ſhould all perhaps do well to cry out in the words of an imploring ſuppliant (he ſupplicated not in vain) "Lord help thou our unbelief." We muſt be deeply conſcious of our guilt and miſery, heartily repenting of our ſins, and firmly reſolving to forſake them: and thus penitently "flee-"ing for refuge to the hope ſet before us," we muſt found altogether on the merit of the crucified

ſied Redeemer our hopes of eſcape from their deſerved puniſhment, and of deliverance from their enſlaving power. This muſt be our firſt, our laſt, our only plea. We are to ſurrender ourſelves up to him to "be waſhed in his blood*," to be ſanctified by his Spirit, reſolving to receive him for our Lord and Maſter, to learn in his ſchool, to obey all his commandments.

It may perhaps be not unneceſſary, after having treated ſo largely on this important topic, to add a few words in order to obviate a charge which may be urged againſt us, that we are inſiſting on nice and abſtruſe diſtinctions in what is a matter of general concern; and this too in a ſyſtem, which on its original promulgation was declared to be peculiarly intended for the ſimple and poor. It will be abundantly evident however on a little reflection, and experience fully proves the poſition, that what has been required is not the perception of a ſubtile diſtinction, but a ſtate and condition of heart. To the former, the poor and the ignorant muſt be indeed confeſſed unequal; but they are far leſs indiſpoſed than the great and the learned, to bow down to that "preaching of the croſs which is to them that "periſh fooliſhneſs, but unto them that are ſaved "the power of God, and the wiſdom of God." The poor are not liable to be puffed up by the intoxicating fumes of ambition and worldly grandeur. They are leſs likely to be kept from entering into the ſtrait and narrow way, and when they have entered to be drawn back again or to be retarded in their progreſs, by the cares or the pleaſures of life. They may expreſs themſelves ill; but their views may be ſimple, and their

* Rev. i. 5.

hearts

hearts humble, penitent, and ſincere. It is as in other caſes; the vulgar are the ſubjects of phænomena, the learned explain them: the former know nothing of the theory of viſion or of ſentiment; but this ignorance hinders not that they ſee and think, and though unable to diſcourſe elaborately on the paſſions, they can feel warmly for their children, their friends, their country.

After this digreſſion, if that be indeed a digreſſion which by removing a formidable objection renders the truth of the poſitions we wiſh to eſtabliſh more clear and leſs queſtionable, we may now reſume the thread of our argument. Still intreating therefore the attention of thoſe, who have not been uſed to think much of the neceſſity of this undivided, and, if it may be ſo termed, unadulterated reliance, for which we have been contending; we would ſtill more particularly addreſs ourſelves to others who are diſpoſed to believe that though, in ſome obſcure and vague ſenſe, the death of Chriſt as the ſatisfaction for our ſins, and for the purchaſe of our future happineſs, and the ſanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, are to be admitted as fundamental articles of our creed, yet that theſe are doctrines ſo much above us, that they are not objects ſuited to our capacities; and that, turning our eyes therefore from theſe difficult ſpeculations, we ſhould fix them on the practical and moral precepts of the Goſpel. "Theſe it moſt "concerns us to know; theſe therefore let us "ſtudy. Such is the frailty of our nature, ſuch "the ſtrength and number of our temptations to "evil, that in reducing the Goſpel morality to "practice we ſhall find full employment: and "by attending to theſe moral precepts, rather "than to thoſe high myſterious doctrines which

"you

" you are preſſing on us, we ſhall beſt prepare to " appear before God on that tremendous day, " when " He ſhall judge every man according " to his WORKS."

" Vain wiſdom all, and falſe philoſophy!"

It will at once deſtroy this flimſy web, to reply in the words of our bleſſed Saviour, and of his beloved Diſciple—" This is the *work* of God, " that ye *believe* in him whom he hath ſent *." " This is his *commandment*, that we ſhould *believe* " on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt †." In truth, if we conſider but for a moment the opinions (they ſcarcely deſerve the name of ſyſtem) of men who argue thus, we muſt be conſcious of their abſurdity. This may be not inconſiſtently the language of the modern Unitarian; but ſurely it is in the higheſt degree unreaſonable to admit into our ſcheme all the grand peculiarities of Chriſtianity, and having admitted, to neglect and think no more of them! " Wherefore" (might the Socinian ſay) " Wherefore all this " coſtly and complicated machinery? It is like " the Tychonic aſtronomy, encumbered and " ſelf-convicted by its own complicated relations " and uſeleſs perplexities. It is ſo little like the " ſimplicity of nature, it is ſo unworthy of the " divine hand, that it even offends againſt thoſe " rules of propriety which we require to be ob- " ſerved in the imperfect compoſitions of the " human intellect *(a)*."

Well may the Socinian aſſume this lofty tone, with thoſe whom we are now addreſſing. If theſe be indeed the doctrines of Revelation, common ſenſe ſuggeſts to us that from their na-

* John, vi. 29. † 1 John, iii. 23.

(a) Nec Deus interfit, &c.

ture

ture and their magnitude, they deſerve our moſt ſerious regard. It is the very theology of Epicurus to allow the exiſtence of theſe "heavenly "things," but to deny their connection with human concerns, and their influence on human actions. Beſides the unreaſonableneſs of this conduct, we might ſtrongly urge alſo in this connection the prophaneneſs of thus treating as matters of ſubordinate conſideration thoſe parts of the ſyſtem of Chriſtianity, which are ſo ſtrongly impreſſed on our reverence by the dignity of the perſon to whom they relate. This very argument is indeed repeatedly and pointedly preſſed by the ſacred writers *.

Nor is the prophane irreverence of this conduct more ſtriking than its ingratitude. When from reading that our Saviour was "the bright-"neſs of his Father's glory, and the expreſs "image of his perſon, upholding all things by "the word of his power," we go on to conſider the purpoſe for which he came on earth, and all that he did and ſuffered for us; ſurely if we have a ſpark of ingenuouſneſs left within us, we ſhall condemn ourſelves as guilty of the blackeſt ingratitude, in rarely noticing, or coldly turning away, on whatever ſhallow pretences, from the contemplation of theſe miracles of mercy. For thoſe baſer minds however on which fear alone can operate, that motive is ſuperadded: and we are plainly forewarned, both directly and indirectly, by the example of the Jewiſh nation, that God will not hold them guiltleſs who are thus unmindful of his moſt ſignal acts of condeſcenſion and kindneſs. But as this is a queſtion of pure Revelation, reaſonings from probability

* Vide Heb. ii. 1, &c.

may

may not be deemed deciſive. To Revelation therefore we muſt appeal; and as it might be to treſpaſs on the reader's patience fully to diſcuſs this moſt important ſubject, we muſt refer him to the ſacred Writings themſelves for complete ſatisfaction. We would earneſtly recommend it to him to weigh with the utmoſt ſerioufneſs thoſe paſſages of Scripture wherein the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity are expreſsly mentioned; and farther, to attend with due regard to the illuſtration and confirmation, which the concluſions reſulting from thoſe paſſages receive incidentally from the word of God. They who maintain the opinion which we are combating, will hereby become convinced that their's is indeed an *unſcriptural* Religion; and will learn inſtead of turning off their eyes from the grand peculiarities of Chriſtianity, to keep theſe ever in view, as the pregnant principles whence all the reſt muſt derive their origin, and receive their beſt ſupport *.

* Any one who wiſhes to inveſtigate this ſubject, will do well to ſtudy attentively M'l AURIN's Eſſay on Prejudices againſt the Goſpel.—It may not be amiſs here to direct the reader's attention to a few leading arguments, many of them thoſe of the work juſt recommended. Let him maturely eſtimate the force of thoſe terms, whereby the Apoſtle in the following paſſages deſignates and characterizes the whole of the Chriſtian ſyſtem. "We preach Chriſt crucified"—"We determined to know no-"thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified." The value of this argument will be acknowledged by all who conſider, that a ſyſtem is never deſignated by an immaterial or an inferior part of it, but by that which conſtitutes its prime conſideration and eſſential diſtinction. The concluſion ſuggeſted by this remark is confirmed by the Lord's Supper being the rite by which our Saviour himſelf commanded his Diſciples to keep him in remembrance; and indeed a ſimilar leſſon is taught by the Sacrament of Baptiſm, which ſhadows out our ſouls being waſhed and purified by the blood of Chriſt. Obſerve

Let us then each for himſelf ſolemnly aſk ourſelves, whether *we* have fled for refuge to the

ſerve next the frequency with which our Saviour's death and ſufferings are introduced, and how often they are urged as practical motives.

" The minds of the Apoſtles ſeem full of this ſubject. Every " thing put them in mind of it; they did not allow themſelves " to have it long out of their view, nor did any other branch " of ſpiritual inſtruction make them loſe ſight of it." Conſider next that part of the Epiſtle to the Romans, wherein St. Paul ſpeaks of ſome who went about to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, and had not ſubmitted themſelves to the righteouſneſs of God. May not this charge be in ſome degree urged, and even more ſtrongly than in the caſe of the Jews, againſt thoſe who ſatisfy themſelves with vague, general, occaſional thoughts of our Saviour's mediation; and the ſource of whoſe habitual complacency, as we explained above, is rather their being tolerably well ſatisfied with their own characters and conduct? Yet St. Paul declares concerning thoſe of whom he ſpeaks, as concerning perſons whoſe ſad ſituation could not be too much lamented, that he had great heavineſs and continual ſorrow in his heart, adding ſtill more emphatical expreſſions of deep and bitter regret.

Let the Epiſtle to the Galatians be alſo carefully examined and conſidered; and let it be fairly aſked, what was the particular in which the Judaizing Chriſtians were defective, and the want of which is ſpoken of in ſuch ſtrong terms as theſe; that it fruſtrates the grace of God, and muſt debar from all the benefits of the death of Jeſus? The Judaizing converts were not immoral. They ſeem to have admitted the chief tenets concerning our Saviour. But they appear to have been diſpoſed to truſt *(not wholly, be it obſerved alſo, but only in part)* for their acceptance with God, to the Moſaic inſtitutions, inſtead of repoſing wholly on the merits of Chriſt. Here let it be remembered, that when a compliance with theſe inſtitutions was not regarded as conveying this inference, the Apoſtle ſhewed by his own conduct, that he did not deem it criminal; whence, no leſs than from the words of the Epiſtle, it is clear that the offence of the Judaizing Chriſtians whom he condemned, was what we have ſtated; not their obſtinately continuing to adhere to a diſpenſation the ceremonial of which Chriſtianity had abrogated, or their truſting to the ſacrifices of the Levitical Law, which were in their own nature inefficacious for the blotting out of ſin *.

* Vide Heb. vii. viii. ix. x.

appointed

appointed hope? And whether we are habitually looking to it, as to the only ſource of conſolation? "Other foundation can no man lay:" there is no other ground of dependence, no other plea for pardon; but *here* there *is* hope, even to the uttermoſt. Let us labour then to affect our hearts with a deep conviction of our need of a Redeemer, and of the value of his offered mediation. Let us fall down humbly before the throne of God, imploring pity and pardon in the name of the Son of his love. Let us beſeech him to give us a true ſpirit of repentance, and of hearty undivided faith in the Lord Jeſus. Let us not be ſatisfied till the cordiality of our belief be confirmed to us by that character of the Apoſtle, "that to as many as "believe Chriſt is precious;" and let us ſtrive to increaſe daily in *love* towards our bleſſed Saviour; and pray earneſtly that "we may be filled "with *Joy* and *Peace* in believing, that we may "abound in *Hope* through the power of the "Holy Ghoſt." Let us diligently put in practice the directions formerly given for cheriſhing and cultivating the principle of the Love of Chriſt. With this view let us labour aſſiduouſly to increaſe in knowledge, that our's may be a deeply rooted and rational affection. By frequent meditation on the incidents of our Saviour's life, and ſtill more on the aſtoniſhing circumſtances of his death; by often calling to mind the ſtate from which he propoſes to reſcue us, and the glories of his heavenly kingdom; by continual intercourſe with him of prayer and praiſe, of dependence and confidence in dangers, of hope and joy in our brighter hours, let us endeavour to keep him conſtantly preſent to our

minds, and to render all our conceptions of him more diſtinct, lively, and intelligent. The title of Chriſtian is a reproach to us, if we eſtrange ourſelves from Him after whom we are denominated. The name of Jeſus is not to be to *us* like the Allah of the Mahometans, a taliſman or an amulet to be worn on the arm, as an external badge merely and ſymbol of our profeſſion, and to preſerve us from evil by ſome myſterious and unintelligible potency; but it is to be engraven deeply on the heart, there written by the finger of God himſelf in everlaſting characters. It is our title known and underſtood to preſent peace and future glory. The aſſurance which it conveys of a bright reverſion, will lighten the burthens, and alleviate the ſorrows of life; and in ſome happier moments, it will impart to us ſomewhat of that fulneſs of joy which is at God's right hand, enabling us to join even here in the heavenly Hoſannah, "Worthy is the Lamb that "was ſlain, to receive power, and riches, and "wiſdom, and ſtrength, and honour, and "glory, and bleſſing *." "Bleſſing, and ho"nour, and glory, and power, be unto him "that ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the "Lamb for ever and ever †."

CHAPTER IV.

On the prevailing inadequate Conceptions concerning the Nature and the Strictneſs of PRACTICAL *Chriſtianity.*

SECT. I.

ONE part of this title may perhaps on the firſt view excite ſome ſurpriſe in any one, who may

* Rev. v. 12. † ib. 13.

have

have drawn a haſty inference from the charges conveyed by the two preceding chapters. Such an one might be diſpoſed to expect, that they who have very low conceptions of the corruption of human nature, would be proportionably leſs indulgent to human frailty; and that they who lay little ſtreſs on Chriſt's ſatisfaction for ſin, or on the operations of the Holy Spirit, would be more high and rigid in their demands of diligent endeavours after univerſal holineſs; ſince their ſcheme implies that we muſt depend chiefly on our own exertions and performances for our acceptance with God.

But any ſuch expectations as theſe would be greatly diſappointed. There is in fact a region of truth, and a region of errors. They who hold the fundamental doctrines of Scripture in their due force, hold alſo in its due degree of purity the practical ſyſtem which Scripture inculcates. But they who explain away the former, ſoften down the latter alſo, and reduce it to the level of their own defective ſcheme. It is not from any confidence in the ſuperior amount of their own performances, or in the greater vigour of their own exertions, that they reconcile themſelves to their low views of the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, and of the influence of the Spirit; but it ſhould rather ſeem their plan ſo to depreſs the required ſtandard of practice, that no man need fall ſhort of it, that no ſuperior aid can be wanted for enabling us to attain to it. It happens however with reſpect to their ſimple method of morality, as in the caſe of the ſhort ways to knowledge, of which ſome vain pretenders have vaunted themſelves to be poſſeſſed: deſpiſing the beaten track in which more ſober and humble ſpirits have been content to tread, they have indignantly

dignantly ſtruck into new and untried paths; but theſe have failed of conducting them to the right object, and have iſſued only in ignorance and conceit.

It ſeems in our days to be the commonly received opinion, that provided a man admit in general terms the truth of Chriſtianity, though he know not or conſider not much concerning the particulars of the ſyſtem; and if he be not habitually guilty of any of the groſſer vices againſt his fellow creatures, we have no great reaſon to be diſſatisfied with him, or to queſtion the validity of his claim to the name and conſequent privileges of a Chriſtian. The title implies no more than a ſort of formal, general aſſent to Chriſtianity in the groſs, and a degree of morality in practice, but little if at all ſuperior to that for which we look in a good Deiſt, Muſſulman, or Hindoo.

If any one be diſpoſed to deny that this is a fair repreſentation of the religion of the bulk of the Chriſtian world, he might be aſked, whether if it were proved to them beyond diſpute that Chriſtianity is a mere forgery, would this occaſion any great change in their conduct or habits of mind? Would any alteration be made in conſequence of this diſcovery, except in a few of their ſpeculative opinions, which, when diſtinct from practice, it is a part of their own ſyſtem, as has been before remarked, to think of little conſequence, and in their attendance on public worſhip, which however (knowing the good effects of religion upon the lower orders of the people) they might ſtill think it better to attend occaſionally for example's ſake? Would not their regard for their character, their health, their domeſtic and ſocial comforts, ſtill continue

to reſtrain them from vicious exceſſes, and to prompt them to perſiſt in the diſcharge, according to their preſent meaſure, of the various duties of their ſtations? Would they find themſelves diſpoſſeſſed of what had been to them hitherto the repoſitory of counſel and inſtruction, the rule of their conduct, their habitual ſource of peace, and hope, and conſolation?

It were needleſs to put theſe queſtions. They are anſwered in fact already by the lives of many known unbelievers, between whom and theſe profeſſed Chriſtians, even the familiar aſſociates of both, though men of diſcernment and obſervation, would diſcover little difference either in conduct or temper of mind. How little then does Chriſtianity deſerve that title to novelty and ſuperiority which has been almoſt univerſally admitted; that pre-eminence, as a practical code, over all other ſyſtems of ethics! How unmerited are the praiſes which have been laviſhed upon it by its friends; praiſes, in which even its enemies (not in general diſpoſed to make conceſſions in its favour) have ſo often been unwarily drawn in to acquieſce!

Was it then for this, that the Son of God condeſcended to become our inſtructor and our pattern, leaving us an example that we might tread in his ſteps? Was it for this that the apoſtles of Chriſt voluntarily ſubmitted to hunger and nakedneſs and pain, and ignominy and death, when forewarned too by their Maſter that ſuch would be their treatment? That, after all, their diſciples ſhould attain to no higher a ſtrain of virtue than thoſe who rejecting their Divine authority, ſhould ſtill adhere to the old philoſophy?

But

But it may perhaps be objected that we are forgetting an obſervation which we ourſelves have made, that Chriſtianity has raiſed the general ſtandard of morals; to which therefore Infidelity herſelf now finds it prudent to conform, availing herſelf of the pure morality of Chriſtianity, and ſometimes wiſhing to uſurp to herſelf the credit of it, while ſhe ſtigmatizes the authors with the epithets of ignorant dupes or deſigning impoſtors!

But let it then be aſked, are the motives of Chriſtianity ſo little neceſſary to the practice of it, its principles to its concluſions, that the one may be ſpared and yet the other remain in undiminiſhed force? Still then, its *Doctrines* are no more than a barren and inapplicable or at leaſt an unneceſſary theory, the place of which, it may perhaps be added, would be well ſupplied by a more ſimple and leſs coſtly ſcheme.

But can it be? Is Chriſtianity then reduced to a mere creed? Is its practical influence bounded within a few external plauſibilities? Does its eſſence conſiſt only in a few ſpeculative opinions, and a few uſeleſs and unprofitable tenets? And can this be the ground of that portentous diſtinction, which is ſo unequivocally made by the Evangeliſt between thoſe who accept, and thoſe who reject the Goſpel: "He that believeth on "the Son, hath everlaſting life: and he that "believeth not the Son, ſhall not ſee life: but "the wrath of God abideth on him?" This were to run into the very error which the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians would be moſt forward to condemn, of making an unproductive faith the rule of God's future judgment, and the ground of an eternal ſeparation. Thus not unlike the rival circumnavigators from Spain and Portugal, who

who ſetting out in contrary directions, found themſelves in company at the very time they thought themſelves fartheſt from each other; ſo the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians arrive, though by a different courſe, almoſt at the very ſame point, and occupy nearly the ſame ſtation as a ſet of enthuſiaſts, who alſo reſt upon a barren faith, to whom on the firſt view they might be thought the moſt nearly oppoſite, and whoſe tenets they with reaſon profeſs to hold in peculiar deteſtation. By what pernicious courteſy of language is it, that this wretched ſyſtem has been flattered with the name of Chriſtianity.

THE morality of the Goſpel is not ſo ſlight a fabric. Chriſtianity throughout the whole extent exhibits proofs of its Divine original, and its practical precepts are no leſs pure than its doctrines are ſublime. Can the compaſs of language furniſh injunctions ſtricter in their meaſure or larger in their comprehenſion, than thoſe with which the word of God abounds; "*Whatſoever* ye do in *word* or *deed*, do *all* in the name of the Lord Jeſus;"—"Be *ye* holy, *for God is holy*:"—"Be ye *perfect* as your Father which is in Heaven is *perfect*?" We are commanded to *perfect* holineſs, to go on unto *perfection*.

Such are the Scripture admonitions; and ſurely they to whom ſuch admonitions are addreſſed, may not ſafely acquieſce in low attainments: a concluſion to which alſo we are led by the force of the expreſſions by which Chriſtians are characterized in Scripture, and by the radical and thorough change, which is repreſented as taking place in any man on his becoming a real Chriſtian. "Every one," it is ſaid, "that hath this hope, purifieth himſelf even as God

" is pure :" true Chriſtians are ſaid to be " par-
" takers of the Divine nature ;"—" to be creat-
" ed anew in the image of God ;"—" to be
" temples of the Holy Ghoſt ;" the effects of which muſt appear " in *all* goodneſs and righte-
" ouſneſs and truth."

Great as was the progreſs which the apoſtle Paul had made in all virtue, he declares of himſelf that *he* ſtill preſſes forward, " forgetting the
" things which are behind, and reaching forth
" unto the things which are before." He prays for his beloved diſciples, " that they may be
" *filled* with *all* the fulneſs of God ;" that they may be *filled* " with the fruits of righteouſneſs :"
" that they might walk worthy of the Lord un-
" to *all* pleaſing, being fruitful in *every* good
" work." Nor is it a leſs pregnant and comprehenſive petition, which, from our bleſſed Saviour's inſerting it in that form of prayer which he has given as a model for our imitation, we may infer ought to be the habitual ſentiment of our hearts ; " Thy will be done in Earth *as it is*
" *Heaven*."

Theſe few extracts from the word of God will ſerve abundantly to vindicate the *ſtrictneſs* of the Chriſtian morality : but this point will however be ſtill more fully eſtabliſhed, when we proceed to inveſtigate the *nature*, *eſſence*, and *governing principles* of the Chriſtian character.

It is the grand eſſential practical characteriſtic of true Chriſtians, that relying on the promiſes to repenting ſinners of acceptance through the Redeemer, they have renounced and abjured all other maſters, and have cordially and unreſervedly devoted themſelves to God. This is indeed the very figure which baptiſm daily repreſents to us : like the father of Hannibal, we there bring

bring our infant to the altar, we conſecrate him to the ſervice of *his proper owner*, and vow *in his name* eternal hoſtilities againſt all the enemies of his ſalvation. After the ſame manner Chriſtians are become the ſworn enemies of ſin; they will henceforth hold no parley with it, they will allow it in no ſhape, they will admit it to no compoſition; the war which they have denounced againſt it, is cordial, univerſal, irreconcilable.

But this not all—It is now their determined purpoſe to yield themſelves without reſerve to the reaſonable ſervice of their rightful Sovereign. "They are not their own:"—their bodily and mental faculties, their natural and acquired endowments, their ſubſtance, their authority, their time, their influence; all theſe, they conſider as belonging to them, not for their own gratification, but as ſo many inſtruments to be conſecrated to the honour and employed in the ſervice of God. This muſt be the maſter principle to which every other muſt be ſubordinate. Whatever may have been hitherto their ruling paſſion; whatever hitherto their leading purſuit; whether ſenſual, or intellectual, of ſcience, of taſte, of fancy, or of feeling, it muſt now poſſeſs but a ſecondary place; or rather (to ſpeak more correctly) it muſt exiſt only at the pleaſure, and be put altogether under the controul and direction, of its true and legitimate ſuperior.

Thus it is the prerogative of Chriſtianity "to "bring into captivity *every thought* to the obedi- "ence of Chriſt." They who really feel its power, are reſolved (in the language of Scripture) "to "live no longer to themſelves, but to him that "died for them;" they know indeed their own infirmities; they know, that the way on which they have entered is ſtrait and difficult, but they know

know too the encouraging aſſurance, "They "who wait on the Lord ſhall renew their "ſtrength;" and relying on this animating declaration, they deliberately purpoſe that, ſo far as they may be able, the grand governing maxim of their future lives ſhall be, "*to do all to the glory* "*of God.*"

Behold here the ſeminal principle, which contains within it, as in an embryo ſtate, the rudiments of all true virtue; which, ſtriking deep its roots, though feeble perhaps and lowly in its beginnings, ſilently progreſſive; and almoſt inſenſibly maturing, yet will ſhortly, even in the bleak and churliſh temperature of this world, lift up its head and ſpread abroad its branches, bearing abundant fruits; precious fruits of refreſhment and conſolation, of which the boaſted products of philoſophy are but fickly imitations, void of fragrance and of flavour. But,

Igneus eſt ollis vigor & *cæleſtis* origo.

At length it ſhall be tranſplanted into its native region, and enjoy a more genial climate, and a kindlier ſoil; and, burſting forth into full luxuriance, with unfading beauty and unexhauſted odours, ſhall flouriſh for ever in the paradiſe of God.

But while the ſervants of Chriſt continue in this life, glorious as is the iſſue of their labours, they receive but too many humiliating memorials of their remaining imperfections, and they daily find reaſon to confeſs, that they cannot do the things that they would. Their *determination*, however, is ſtill unſhaken, and it is the fixed deſire of their hearts to improve in *all holineſs*—and this, let it be obſerved, on many accounts. Various paſſions concur to puſh them forward; they

they are urged on by the dread of failure, in this arduous but neceſſary work; they truſt not, where their all is at ſtake, to lively emotions, or to internal impreſſions however warm; the example of Chriſt is their pattern, the word of God is their rule; there they read, that "without "holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord." It is the deſcription of real Chriſtians, that "they are "gradually changed into the image of their Di-"vine Maſter;" and they dare not allow themſelves to believe their title ſure, except ſo far as they can diſcern in themſelves the growing traces of this bleſſed reſemblance.

It is not merely however the fear of miſery, and the deſire of happineſs, by which they are actuated in their endeavours to excel in all holineſs; they love it for its own ſake: nor is it *ſolely* by the ſenſe of ſelf-intereſt (this, though often unreaſonably condemned, is but it muſt be confeſſed a principle of an inferior order) that they are influenced in their determination to obey the will, and to cultivate the favour of God. This determination has its foundations indeed in a deep and humiliating ſenſe of his exalted Majeſty and infinite power, and of their own extreme inferiority and littleneſs, attended with a ſettled conviction of its being their duty as his creatures, to ſubmit in all things to the will of their great Creator. But theſe awful impreſſions are relieved and ennobled by an admiring ſenſe of the infinite perfections and infinite amiableneſs of the Divine Character; animated by a confiding though humble hope of his fatherly kindneſs and protection; and quickened by the grateful recollection of immenſe and continually increaſing obligations. This is the Chriſtian love of God! A love compounded of admiration, of preference, of hope,

of

of truſt, of joy; chaſtiſed by reverential awe, and wakeful with continual gratitude.

I would here expreſs myſelf with caution, leſt I ſhould inadvertently wound the heart of ſome weak but ſincere believer. The elementary principles which have been above enumerated, may exiſt in various degrees and proportions. A difference in natural diſpoſition, in the circumſtances of the paſt life, and in numberleſs other particulars, may occaſion a great difference in the predominant tempers of different Chriſtians. In one the love, in another the fear of God may have the aſcendency; truſt in one, and in another gratitude; but in greater or leſs degrees, a cordial complacency in the ſovereignty, an exalted ſenſe of the perfections, a grateful impreſſion of the goodneſs, and a humble hope of the favour of the Divine Being, are common to them all.—Common—the determination to devote themſelves without exceptions, to the ſervice and glory of God.—Common—the deſire of holineſs and of continual progreſs towards perfection.—Common—an abaſing conſciouſneſs of their own unworthineſs, and of their many remaining infirmities, which interpoſe ſo often to corrupt the ſimplicity of their intentions, to thwart the execution of their purer purpoſes, and fruſtrate the reſolutions of their better hours.

But ſome perhaps, who will not directly and in the groſs oppoſe the concluſions for which we have been contending, may endeavour to elude them. It may be urged, that to repreſent them as of general application, is going much too far; and however true in the caſe of ſome individuals of a higher order, it may be aſſerted they are not applicable to ordinary Chriſtians; from theſe ſo much will not ſurely be expected; and here

perhaps

perhaps there may be a ſecret reference to that ſuppoſed mitigation of the requiſitions of the divine Law under the Chriſtian diſpenſation, which was formerly noticed. This is ſo important a point that it ought not to be paſſed over: let us call in the authority of Scripture; at the ſame time, not to tire the patience of our readers, but a few paſſages ſhall be cited, and we muſt refer to the word of God itſelf thoſe who wiſh for fuller ſatisfaction. The difficulty here is not to find proofs, but to ſelect with diſcretion from the multitude which pour in upon us. Here alſo, as in former inſtances, the poſitive injunctions of Scripture are confirmed and illuſtrated by various conſiderations and inferences, ſuggeſted by other parts of the ſacred Writings, all tending to the ſame infallible concluſion.

In the firſt place, the precepts are expreſſed in the broadeſt and moſt general terms; there is no hint given, that any perſons are at liberty to conceive themſelves exempted from the obligation of them; and in any who are diſpoſed to urge ſuch a plea of exemption, it may well excite the moſt ſerious apprehenſion to conſider how the plea would be received by an earthly tribunal: no weak argument this to any who are acquainted with the Scriptures, and who know how often God is there repreſented as reaſoning with mankind on the principles, which they have eſtabliſhed for their dealings with each other.

But in the next place the precepts in queſtion contain within themſelves abundant proofs of their *univerſal* application, inaſmuch as they are grounded on circumſtances and relations common to *all* Chriſtians, and of the benefits of which, even our Objectors themſelves (though they

they would evade the practical deductions from them) would not be willing to relinquish their ſhare. Chriſtians " are not their own," becauſe " *they are bought with a price*;" they are not " to " live unto themſelves, but *to him that died for* " *them*;" they are commanded to do the moſt difficult duties, " that they may be the children " of their Father which is in heaven;" and " except a man *be born again of the Spirit*" (thus again becoming one of the ſons of God) " *he can-* " *not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" It is " *be-* " *cauſe they are ſons*," that God has given them what in Scripture language is ſtyled *the ſpirit of adoption.* It is only of " as many *as are led by the* " *Spirit of God*," that it is declared that " they " are the ſons of God;" and we are expreſsly warned (in order as it were to prevent any ſuch looſe profeſſion of Chriſtianity as that which we are here combating) " *If any man* have not the " Spirit of Chriſt, *he is none of his.*" In ſhort, Chriſtians in general are every where denominated *the ſervants and the children* of God, and are required to ſerve him with that ſubmiſſive obedience, and that affectionate promptitude of duty, which belong to thoſe endearing relations.

Eſtimate next, the force of that well known paſſage—" Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God " with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy mind, and " with *all* thy ſoul, and with *all* thy ſtrength!" The injunction is multiplied on us, as it were, to ſilence the ſophiſtry of the caviller, and to fix the moſt inconſiderate mind. And though, for the ſake of argument, we ſhould concede for the preſent, that, under *the qualifications formerly ſuggeſted*, an *ardent* and *vigorous* affection were not indiſpenſably required of us; yet ſurely if the words have any meaning at all, the leaſt which

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can be intended by them is that ſettled predominant eſteem and cordial preference for which we are now contending. The concluſion which this paſſage forces on us, is ſtrikingly confirmed by other parts of Scripture, wherein the love of God is poſitively commended to the *whole* of a Chriſtian church *; or wherein the want of it †, or wherein its not being the chief and ruling affection, is charged on perſons profeſſing themſelves Chriſtians, as being ſufficient to diſprove their claim to that appellation, or as being equivalent to denying it ‡. Let not therefore any deceive themſelves by imagining, that only an abſolute unqualified renunciation of the deſire of the favour of God is *here* condemned. God will not accept of a *divided* affection; a *ſingle* heart, and a *ſingle* eye are in expreſs terms declared to be indiſpenſably required of us. We are ordered, under the figure of amaſſing heavenly treaſure, to make the favour and ſervice of God our *chief* purſuit, for this very reaſon, becauſe "*where our treaſure is, there will our hearts be alſo.*" It is on this principle that in ſpeaking of particular vices, ſuch phraſes are often uſed in Scripture, as ſuggeſt that their criminality mainly conſiſts in drawing away the HEART from Him who is the juſt object of its preference; and that ſins, which we might think very different in criminality, are claſſed together, becauſe they all agree in this grand character. Nor is this preference aſſerted only over affections which are vicious in themſelves, and to which therefore Chriſtianity might well be ſuppoſed hoſtile; but over thoſe alſo which in their juſt meaſure are

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14. † 1 John, iii. 17.—Rom. xvi. 18.—Compared with Philippians, iii. 19. ‡ 2 Tim. iii. 4.

not

not only lawful, but even moſt ſtrongly enjoined on us. "He that loveth father and mother "more than me," ſays our bleſſed Saviour, "is "not worthy of me;" "and he that loveth ſon "or daughter more than me, is not worthy of "me *." The ſpirit of theſe injunctions harmonizes with many commendations in Scripture of zeal for the honour of God; as well as with that ſtrong expreſſion of diſguſt and abhorrence with which the lukewarm, thoſe that are neither cold nor hot, are ſpoken of as being more loathſome and offenſive than even open and avowed enemies.

Another claſs of inſtances tending to the ſame point is furniſhed by thoſe many paſſages of Scripture, wherein the promoting of *the glory* of God is commanded as our ſupreme and univerſal aim, and wherein the honour due unto *Him* is declared to be that in which He will allow no competitor to participate. On this head indeed the Holy Scriptures are, if poſſible, more peremptory than on the former; and at the ſame time ſo full as to render particular citations unneceſſary, in the caſe of any one who has ever ſo little acquaintance with the word of God.

To put the ſame thing therefore in another light. All who have read the Scriptures muſt confeſs that idolatry is the crime againſt which God's higheſt reſentment is expreſſed, and his ſevereſt puniſhment denounced. But let us not deceive ourſelves. It is not in bowing the knee to idols that idolatry conſiſts, ſo much as in the internal homage of the heart; as in the feeling towards them of any of that ſupreme love, or reverence, or gratitude, which God reſerves to

* Matt. x. 37.

himſelf

himſelf as his own excluſive prerogative. On the ſame principle, whatever elſe draws off the heart from him, engroſſes our prime regard, and holds the chief place in our eſteem and affections, *that*, in the eſtimation of reaſon, is no leſs an idol to us, than an image of wood or ſtone would be; before which we ſhould fall down and worſhip. Think not this a ſtrained analogy; it is the very language and argument of inſpiration. The ſervant of God is commanded not to ſet up his idol in his *Heart*; and ſenſuality and covetouſneſs are repeatedly termed *Idolatry*. The ſame God who declares—"My "glory will I not give to another, neither my "praiſe *to graven images*," declares alſo—"Let "not the wiſe man glory in his wiſdom, neither "let the mighty man *glory* in his might; let "not the rich man *glory* in his riches *." "No "fleſh may *glory* in his preſence;" "he that "*glorieth*, let him glory in the Lord." The ſudden vengeance by which the vain-glorious oſtentation of Herod was puniſhed, when, acquieſcing in the ſervile adulation of an admiring multitude, "he gave not God the *glory*," is a dreadful comment on theſe injunctions.

Theſe awful declarations, it is to be feared, are little regarded. Let the Great, and the Wiſe, and the Learned, and the Succeſsful lay them ſeriouſly to heart, and labour habitually to conſider their ſuperiority, whether derived from nature, or ſtudy, or fortune, as the unmerited bounty of God. This reflection will naturally tend to produce a diſpoſition, inſtead of that proud ſelf complacency ſo apt to grow upon the human heart, in all reſpects oppoſite to it; a dif-

* Jerem. ix. 23.

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poſition honourable to God, and uſeful to man, a temper compoſed of reverence, humility, and gratitude, and delighting to be engaged in the praiſes, and employed in the benevolent ſervice of the univerſal Benefactor.

But, to return to our ſubject, it only remains to be remarked, that here as in the former inſtances, the characters of the righteous and of the wicked, as delineated in Scripture, exactly correſpond with the repreſentations which have been given of the Scripture injunctions.

The neceſſity of this cordial unreſerved devotedneſs to the glory and ſervice of God, as being indiſpenſable to the character of the true Chriſtian, has been inſiſted on at the greater length, not only on account of its own extreme importance, but alſo becauſe it appears to be a duty too generally overlooked. Once well eſtabliſhed, it will ſerve as a fundamental principle both for the government of the heart and regulation of the conduct; and will prove eminently uſeful in the deciſion of many practical caſes, which it might be difficult to bring under the undiſputed operation of any ſubordinate or appropriate rule.

SECT. II.

AND now, having endeavoured to eſtabliſh the ſtrictneſs, and to aſcertain the eſſential character of true practical Chriſtianity, let us inveſtigate a little more in detail the practical ſyſtem of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians among ourſelves *. It

* It will be remembered by the reader, that it is not the object of this work to animadvert on the vices, defects, and erroneous

It was formerly remarked, that the whole ſubject of Religion was often viewed from ſuch a diſtance as to be ſeen only in the groſs. We now, it is to be feared, ſhall find too much cauſe for believing that they who approach a little nearer, and do diſcover in Chriſtianity ſomewhat of a diſtinct form, yet come not cloſe enough to diſcern her peculiar lineaments and conformation. The writer muſt not be underſtood to mean that the ſeveral miſconceptions, which he ſhall have occaſion to point out, will be generally found to exiſt with any thing like preciſion, much leſs that they are regularly digeſted into a ſyſtem; nor will it be expected they all ſhould meet in the ſame perſon, nor that they will not be found in different people, and under different circumſtances, variouſly blended, combined, and modified. It will be enough if we ſucceed in tracing out great and general outlines. The human countenance may be well deſcribed by its general characters, though infinitely varied by the peculiarities which belong to different individuals, and often by ſuch ſhades and minuteneſſes of difference, as though abundantly obvious to our perceptions, it would exceed the power of definition to diſcriminate, or even of language to expreſs.

A very erroneous notion appears to prevail concerning the true nature of Religion. Religion, agreeably to what has been already ſtated, (the importance of the ſubject will excuſe repetition) may be conſidered as the implantation of a vigorous and active principle; it is ſeated in

roneous opinions of the times, except ſo far as they are received into the prevailing religious ſyſtem, or are tolerated by it, and are not thought ſufficient to prevent a man from being eſteemed on the whole a very tolerable Chriſtian.

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the heart, where its authority is recognized as ſupreme, whence by degrees it expels whatever is oppoſed to it, and where it gradually brings all the affections and deſires under its complete controul and regulation.

But though the heart be its ſpecial reſidence, it may be ſaid to poſſeſs in a degree the ubiquity of its Divine Author. Every endeavour and purſuit muſt acknowledge its preſence; and whatever does not, or will not, or cannot receive its ſacred ſtamp, is to be condemned as inherently defective, and is to be at once abſtained from or abandoned. It is like the principle of vitality, which, animating and informing every part, lives throughout the whole of the human body, and communicates its kindly influence to the ſmalleſt and remoteſt fibres of the frame. But the notion of Religion entertained by many among us ſeems altogether different. They begin indeed, in ſubmiſſion to her clear prohibitions, by fencing off from the field of human action, a certain diſtrict, which, though it in many parts bear fruits on which they caſt a longing eye, they cannot but confeſs to be forbidden ground. They next aſſign to Religion a portion, larger or ſmaller according to whatever may be their circumſtances and views, in which however ſhe is to poſſeſs merely a qualified juriſdiction, and having ſo done, they conceive that without let or hindrance they have a right to range at will over the ſpacious remainder. Religion can claim only a ſtated proportion of their thoughts, and time, and fortune, and influence; and of theſe, or perhaps of any of them, if they make her any thing of a liberal allowance, ſhe may well be ſatisfied: the reſt is now their own to do what they will with; they have paid their

their tythes, ſay rather their compoſition, the demands of the Church are ſatisfied, and they may ſurely be permitted to enjoy what ſhe has left without moleſtation or interference.

It is ſcarcely poſſible to ſtate too ſtrongly the miſchief which reſults from this fundamental error. At the ſame time its conſequences are ſo natural and obvious, that one would think it ſcarcely poſſible not to foreſee that they muſt infallibly follow. The greateſt part of human actions is conſidered as indifferent. If men are not chargeable with actual vices, and are decent in the diſcharge of their religious duties; if they do not ſtray into the forbidden ground, if they reſpect the rights of the conceded allotment, what more can be expected from them? Inſtead of keeping at a diſtance from *all ſin*, in which alone conſiſts our ſafety, they will be apt not to care how near they approach what they conceive to be the boundary line; if they have not actually paſſed it, there is no harm done, it is no treſpaſs. Thus the free and active ſpirit of Religion is "cribbed and hemmed in;" ſhe is checked in her diſpoſition to expand her territory, and enlarge the circle of her influence. She muſt keep to her preſcribed confines, and every attempt to extend them will be reſiſted as an encroachment.

But this is not all. Since whatever can be gained from her allotment, or whatever can be taken in from the forbidden ground, will be ſo much of addition to that land of liberty, where men may roam at large, free from reſtraint or moleſtation, they will of courſe be conſtantly, and almoſt inſenſibly, ſtraitening and preſſing upon the limits of the religious allotment on the one hand; and on the other, will be removing back

back a little farther and farther the fence which abridges them on the ſide of the forbidden ground. If Religion attempt for a time to defend her frontier, ſhe by degrees gives way. The ſpace ſhe occupies diminiſhes till it be ſcarcely diſcernible; whilſt, her ſpirit extinguiſhed, and her force deſtroyed, ſhe is little more than the nominal poſſeſſor even of the contracted limits to which ſhe has been avowedly reduced.

This it is to be feared is but too faithful a repreſentation of the general ſtate of things among ourſelves. The promotion of the glory of God, and the poſſeſſion of his favour, are no longer recognized as the objects of our higheſt regard, and moſt ſtrenuous endeavours; as furniſhing to us, a vigorous, habitual, and univerſal principle of action. We ſet up for ourſelves: we are become our own maſters. The ſenſe of conſtant homage and continual ſervice is irkſome and galling to us; and we rejoice in being emancipated from it, as from a ſtate of baſe and ſervile villainage. Thus the very tenure and condition, by which life and all its poſſeſſions are held, undergo a total change: our faculties and powers are now our own: whatever we have is regarded rather as a property than as a truſt; or if there ſtill exiſt the remembrance of ſome paramount claim, we are ſatisfied with an occaſional acknowledgment of a nominal right; we pay our pepper corn, and take our eſtates to ourſelves in full and free enjoyment.

Hence it is that ſo little ſenſe of reſponſibility ſeems attached to the poſſeſſion of high rank, or ſplendid abilities, or affluent fortunes, or other means or inſtruments of uſefulneſs. The inſtructive admonitions, "give an account of thy "ſtewardſhip,"—"occupy till I come;" are forgotten.

gotten. Or if it be acknowledged by ſome men of larger views than ordinary, that a reference is to be had to ſome principle ſuperior to that of our own gratification, it is, at beſt, to the good of ſociety, or to the welfare of our families: and even then the obligations reſulting from theſe relations, are ſeldom enforced on us by any higher ſanctions than thoſe of family comfort, and of worldly intereſt or eſtimation. Beſides; what multitudes of perſons are there, people without families, in private ſtations, or of a retired turn, to whom they are ſcarcely held to apply! and what multitudes of caſes to which it would be thought unneceſſary ſcrupuloſity to extend them! Accordingly we find *in fact*, that the generality of mankind among the higher order, in the formation of their ſchemes, in the ſelection of their ſtudies, in the choice of their place of reſidence, in the employment and diſtribution of their time, in their thoughts, converſation, and amuſements, are conſidered as being at liberty, if there be no actual vice, to conſult in the main their own gratification.

Thus the generous and wakeful ſpirit of Chriſtian Benevolence, ſeeking and finding every where occaſions for its exerciſe, is exploded, and a ſyſtem of *decent ſelfiſhneſs* is avowedly eſtabliſhed in its ſtead; a ſyſtem ſcarcely more to be abjured for its impiety, than to be abhorred for its cold inſenſibility to the opportunities of diffuſing happineſs. "Have we no families, or are they "provided for? Are we wealthy, and bred to "no profeſſion? Are we young and lively, and "in the gaiety and vigour of youth? Surely we "may be allowed to take our pleaſure. We ne-"glect no duty, we live in no vice, we do no-"body any harm, and have a right to amuſe

" ourſelves. We have nothing better to do, we " wiſh we had; our time hangs heavy on our " hands for want of it."

I pity the man who can travel from Dan to Beer-ſheba, and cry " It is all barren." No man has a right to be idle—Not to ſpeak of that great work which we all have to accompliſh, and ſurely the *whole* attention of a ſhort and precarious life is not more than an eternal intereſt may well require; where is it that in ſuch a world as this, health and leiſure and affluence may not find ſome ignorance to inſtruct, ſome wrong to redreſs, ſome want to ſupply, ſome miſery to alleviate? Shall Ambition and Avarice never ſleep? Shall they never want objects on which to faſten? Shall they be ſo obſervant to diſcover, ſo acute to diſcern, ſo eager, ſo patient to purſue, and ſhall the Benevolence of Chriſtians want employment?

Yet thus life rolls away with too many of us in a courſe of " ſhapeleſs idleneſs." Its recreations conſtitute its chief buſineſs. Watering places—the ſports of the field—cards! never failing cards!—the aſſembly—the theatre—all contribute their aid—amuſements are multiplied, and combined, and varied, " to fill up the void " of a liſtleſs and languid life;" and by the judicious uſe of theſe different reſources, there is often a kind of ſober ſettled plan of domeſtic diſſipation, in which with all imaginable decency year after year wears away in unprofitable vacancy. Even old age often finds us pacing in the ſame round of amuſements, which our early youth had tracked out. Meanwhile, being conſcious that we are not giving into any flagrant vice, perhaps that we are guilty of no irregularity, and it may be, that we are not neglecting the

the offices of Religion, we perſuade ourſelves that we need not be uneaſy. In the main we do not fall below the general ſtandard of morals, of the claſs and ſtation to which we belong, we may therefore allow ourſelves to glide down the ſtream without apprehenſion of the conſequences.

Some, of a character often hardly to be diſtinguiſhed from the claſs we have been juſt deſcribing, take up with *ſenſual* pleaſures. The chief happineſs of their lives conſiſts in one ſpecies or another of animal gratification; and theſe perſons perhaps will be found to compoſe a pretty large deſcription. It will be remembered, that it belongs not to our purpoſe to ſpeak of the groſsly and ſcandalouſly profligate, who renounce all pretenſions to the name of Chriſtians; but of thoſe who, maintaining a certain decency of character, and perhaps being tolerably obſervant of the forms of Religion, may yet be not improperly termed *ſober ſenſualiſts*. Theſe, though leſs impetuous and more meaſured, are not leſs ſtaunch and ſteady, than the profeſſed votaries of licentious pleaſure, in the purſuit of their favourite objects. "Mortify the fleſh, with its "affections and luſts," is the Chriſtian *precept*; a ſoft luxurious courſe of habitual indulgence, is the *practice* of the bulk of modern Chriſtians: and that conſtant moderation, that wholeſome diſcipline of reſtraint and ſelf-denial, which are requiſite to prevent the unperceived encroachments of the inferior appetites, ſeem altogether diſuſed, as the exploded auſterities of monkiſh ſuperſtition.

Chriſtianity calls her profeſſors to a ſtate of diligent watchfulneſs and active ſervices. But the perſons of whom we are now ſpeaking, for-

getting alike the duties they owe to themſelves and to their fellow-creatures, often act as though their condition were meant to be a ſtate of uniform indulgence, and vacant, unprofitable ſloth. To multiply the comforts of affluence, to provide for the gratification of appetite, to be luxurious without diſeaſes, and indolent without laſſitude, ſeems the chief ſtudy of their lives. Nor can they be clearly exempted from this claſs, who, by a common error, ſubſtituting the means for the end, make the preſervation of health and ſpirits, not as inſtruments of uſefulneſs, but as ſources of pleaſure, their great buſineſs and continual care.

Others again ſeem more to attach themſelves to what have been well termed the 'pomps and 'vanities of this world.' Magnificent houſes, grand equipages, numerous retinues, ſplendid entertainments, high and faſhionable connections, appear to conſtitute, in their eſtimation, the ſupreme happineſs of life. This claſs too, if we miſtake not, will be found numerous in our days; for it muſt be conſidered, *that it is the heart, ſet on theſe things*, which conſtitutes the eſſential character. It often happens, that perſons, to whoſe rank and ſtation theſe indulgences moſt properly belong, are moſt indifferent to them. The undue ſolicitude about them is more viſible in perſons of inferior conditions and ſmaller fortunes, in whom it is not rarely detected by the ſtudious contrivances of a miſapplied ingenuity to reconcile parade with œconomy, and glitter at a cheap rate. But this temper of diſplay and competition is a direct contraſt to the lowly, modeſt, unaſſuming carriage of the true Chriſtian: and wherever there is an evident effort and ſtruggle to excel in the particulars here

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in queſtion, a manifeſt wiſh thus to rival ſuperiors, to outſtrip equals, to dazzle inferiors; it is manifeſt the great end of life, and of all its poſſeſſions, is too little kept in view, and it is to be feared that the gratification of a vain oſtentatious humour is the predominant diſpoſition of the heart.

As there is a ſober ſenſuality, ſo is there alſo a ſober avarice, and a ſober ambition. The commercial and the profeſſional world compoſe the chief ſphere of their influence. They are often recognized and openly avowed as juſt maſter principles of action. But where this is not the caſe, they aſſume ſuch plauſible ſhapes, are called by ſuch ſpecious names, and urge ſuch powerful pleas, that they are received with cordiality, and ſuffered to gather ſtrength without ſuſpicion. The ſeducing conſiderations of diligence in our callings, of ſucceſs in our profeſſion, of making handſome proviſions for our children, beguile our better judgments. "We "riſe early, and late take reſt, and eat the bread "of carefulneſs." In our few intervals of leiſure, our exhauſted ſpirits require refreſhment; the ſerious concerns of our immortal ſouls, are matters of ſpeculation too grave and gloomy to anſwer the purpoſe, and we fly to ſomething that may better deſerve the name of relaxation, till we are again ſummoned to the daily labours of our employment.

Meanwhile Religion ſeldom comes in our way, ſcarcely occurs to our thoughts; and when ſome ſecret miſgivings begin to be felt on this head, company ſoon drowns, amuſements diſſipate, or habitual occupations inſenſibly diſplace or ſmother the riſing apprehenſion. Profeſſional and commercial men perhaps, eſpecially when they

they happen to be perſons of more than ordinary reflection, or of early habits of piety not quite worn away, eaſily quiet their conſciences by the plea, that neceſſary attention to their buſineſs leaves them no time to think on theſe ſerious ſubjects at preſent. "Men of leiſure they confeſs "ſhould conſider them; they themſelves will "do it hereafter when they retire; meanwhile "they are uſefully or at leaſt innocently em-"ployed." Thus buſineſs and pleaſure fill up our time, and the "one thing needful," is forgotten. Reſpected by others, and ſecretly applauding ourſelves, (perhaps congratulating ourſelves that we are not like ſuch an one who is a ſpendthrift or a mere man of pleaſure, or ſuch another who is a notorious miſer) the true principle of action is no leſs wanting in us, and perſonal advancement or the acquiſition of wealth is the object of our ſupreme deſires and predominant purſuit.

It would be to preſume too much on the reader's patience to attempt a delineation of the characters of the politician, the metaphyſician, the ſcholar, the poet, the virtuoſo, the man of taſte, in all their varieties. Of theſe and many other claſſes which might be enumerated, ſuffice it to remark, and to appeal to every man's own experience for the truth of the obſervation, that they in like manner are often completely engroſſed by the objects of their ſeveral purſuits. In many of theſe caſes indeed a generous ſpirit ſurrenders itſelf wholly up with the leſs reſerve, and continues abſorbed with the fuller confidence, from the conſciouſneſs of not being led to its object by ſelf-intereſted motives. Here therefore theſe men are ardent, active, laborious, perſevering, and they think, and ſpeak,

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and act, as thoſe, the whole happineſs of whoſe life turns on the ſucceſs or failure of their endeavours. When ſuch, as we have ſeen it, is the undiſturbed compoſure of mere triflers, it is leſs wonderful that the votaries of learning and of taſte, when abſorbed in their ſeveral purſuits, ſhould be able to check ſtill more eaſily any growing apprehenſion, ſilencing it by the ſuggeſtion, that they are more than harmleſsly, that they are meritoriouſly employed. "Surely "the thanks of mankind are juſtly paid to thoſe "more refined ſpirits who, ſuperior alike to the "ſeductions of eaſe, and the temptations of "avarice, devote their time and talents to the "leſs gainful labours of increaſing the ſtores of "learning or enlarging the boundaries of ſci-"ence; who are engaged in raiſing the charac-"ter and condition of ſociety, by improving the "liberal arts, and adding to the innocent plea-"ſures or elegant accompliſhments of life." Let not the writer be ſo far miſunderſtood, as to be ſuppoſed to inſinuate that Religion is an enemy to the purſuits of taſte, much leſs to thoſe of learning and of ſcience. Let theſe have their *due* place in the eſtimation of mankind; but this muſt not be the *higheſt* place. Let them know their juſt *ſubordination*. They deſerve not to be the *primary* concern, for there is another, to which in importance they bear no more proportion than our ſpan of exiſtence to eternity.

Thus the ſupreme deſires of the heart, the center to which they ſhould tend, loſing its attractive force, are permitted without controul to take that courſe, whatever it may be, which beſt ſuits our natural temper, or to which they are impelled by our various ſituations and circumſtances. Sometimes they manifeſtly appear to

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be almoſt entirely confined to a ſingle track; but perhaps more frequently the lines in which they move are ſo intermingled and diverſified, that it becomes not a little difficult, even when we look into ourſelves, to aſcertain the object by which they are chiefly attracted, or to eſtimate with preciſion the amount of their ſeveral forces, in the different directions in which they move. "Know thyſelf," is in truth an injunction with which the careleſs and the indolent cannot comply. For this compliance, it is requiſite, in obedience to the Scripture precept, "to keep the "heart with all diligence." Mankind are in general deplorably ignorant of their true ſtate; and there are few perhaps who have any adequate conception of the real ſtrength of the ties, by which they are bound to the ſeveral objects of their attachment, or who are aware how ſmall a ſhare of their regard is poſſeſſed by thoſe concerns on which it ought to be ſupremely fixed.

But if it be indeed true, that except the affections of the ſoul be ſupremely fixed on God; that unleſs it be *the leading and governing deſire and primary purſuit* to poſſeſs his favour and promote his glory, we are conſidered as having tranſferred our fealty to an uſurper, and as being in fact revolters from our lawful ſovereign; if this be indeed the Scripture doctrine, all the ſeveral attachments which have been lately enumerated, of the different claſſes of ſociety, wherever they intereſt the affections, and poſſeſs the ſoul in any ſuch meaſure of ſtrength as deſerves to be called *predominance*, are but ſo many varied expreſſions of *diſloyalty*. God requires to ſet up his throne in the heart, and to reign in it without a rival: if he be kept out of his right, it matters not by what competitor. The revolt may be more

avowed

avowed or more ſecret; it may be the treaſon of deliberate preference, or of inconſiderate levity; we may be the ſubjects of a more or of a leſs creditable maſter; we may be employed in ſervices more groſs or more refined: but whether the ſlaves of avarice, of ſenſuality, of diſſipation, of ſloth, or the votaries of ambition, of taſte, or of faſhion; whether ſupremely governed by vanity and ſelf-love, by the deſire of literary fame or of military glory, we are alike eſtranged from the dominion of our rightful ſovereign. Let not this ſeem a harſh poſition; it can appear ſo only from not adverting to what was ſhewn to be the *eſſential nature* of true Religion. He who bowed the knee to the god of medicine or of eloquence, was no leſs an idolater than the worſhipper of the deified patrons of lewdneſs or of theft. In the ſeveral caſes which have been ſpecified, the *external acts* indeed are different; but in *principle* the diſaffection is the ſame; and unleſs we return to our allegiance, we muſt expect the title, and prepare to meet the puniſhment, of rebels on that tremendous day, when all falſe colours ſhall be done away, and (there being no longer any room for the evaſions of worldly ſophiſtry, or the ſmooth plauſibilities of worldly language) "that which "is often highly eſteemed amongſt men, ſhall "appear to have been abomination in the ſight "of God."

Theſe fundamental truths ſeem vaniſhed from the mind, and it follows of courſe, that every thing is viewed leſs and leſs through a religious medium. To ſpeak no longer of inſtances wherein *we ourſelves* are concerned, and wherein the unconquerable power of indulged appetite may be ſuppoſed to beguile our better judgment,

or force us on in defiance of it; not to inſiſt on the motives by which the conduct of men is determined, often avowedly, in what are to *themſelves* the moſt important incidents of life; what are the judgments which they form in the caſe of *others?* Idleneſs, profuſion, thoughtleſſneſs, and diſſipation, the miſapplication of time or of talents, the trifling away of life in frivolous occupations or unprofitable ſtudies; all theſe things we may regret in thoſe around us, in the view of their temporal effects; but they are not conſidered in a religious connection, or lamented as endangering everlaſting happineſs. Exceſſive vanity and inordinate ambition are ſpoken of as weakneſſes rather than as ſins; even covetouſneſs itſelf, though a hateful paſſion, yet, if not extreme, ſcarcely preſents the face of *Irreligion.* Is ſome friend, or even ſome common acquaintance ſick, or has ſome accident befallen him? How ſolicitouſly do we inquire after him, how tenderly do we viſit him, how much perhaps do we regret that he has not better advice, how apt are we to preſcribe for him, and how ſhould we reproach ourſelves, if we were to neglect any means in our power of contributing to his recovery! But "the mind diſeaſed" is neglected and forgotten—"*that* is not our affair; we hope (we "do not perhaps really believe) that here it is "well with him." The truth is, we have no ſolicitude about his ſpiritual intereſt. Here he is treated like the unfortunate traveller in the Goſpel; we look upon him; we ſee but too well his ſad condition, but (Prieſt and Levite alike) we paſs by on the other ſide, and leave him to the officious tenderneſs of ſome poor deſpiſed Samaritan.

Nay,

Nay, take the caſe of our very children, when our hearts being moſt intereſted to promote their happineſs, we muſt be ſuppoſed moſt deſirous of determining on right principles, and where therefore the real ſtandard of our deliberate judgments may be indiſputably aſcertained: in their education and marriage, in the choice of their profeſſions, in our comparative conſideration and judgment of the different parts of their ſeveral characters, how little do we reflect that they are immortal beings! Health, learning, credit, the amiable and agreeable qualities, above all, fortune and ſucceſs in life, are taken, and not unjuſtly taken, into the account; but how ſmall a ſhare in forming our opinions is allowed to the probable effect which may be produced on their eternal intereſts! Indeed the ſubjects of our mutual inquiries, and congratulations, and condolences, prove but too plainly what conſiderations are in theſe caſes uppermoſt in our thoughts.

Such are the fatal and widely ſpreading effects, which but too naturally follow from the admiſſion of the grand fundamental error before mentioned, that of not conſidering Religion as a principle of univerſal application and command. Robbed of its beſt energies, Religion now takes the form of a cold compilation of reſtraints and prohibitions. It is looked upon ſimply as a ſet of penal ſtatutes; theſe, though wiſe and reaſonable, are however, ſo far as they extend, abridgments of our natural liberty, and nothing which comes to us in this ſhape is extremely acceptable:

Atqui nolint occidere quemquam, poſſe volunt.

Conſidering moreover, that the matter of them is not in general very palatable, and that the partiality

partiality of every man where his own cauſe is in queſtion, will be likely to make him conſtrue them liberally in his own favour, we might before-hand have formed a tolerable judgment of the manner in which they are actually treated. Sometimes we attend to the words rather than to the ſpirit of Scripture injunctions, overlooking the principle they involve, which a better acquaintance with the word of God would have clearly taught us to infer from them. At others, "the ſpirit of an injunction is all;" and this we contrive to collect ſo dexterouſly, as thereby to relax or annul the ſtrictneſs of the terms. "Whatever is not expreſsly forbidden cannot "be *very* criminal; whatever is not poſitively "enjoined, cannot be indiſpenſably neceſſary— "If we do not offend againſt the laws, what "more can be expected from us?—The perſons "to whom the ſtrict precepts of the Goſpel "were given, were in very different circum-"ſtances from thoſe in which we are placed. "The injunctions were drawn rather tighter "than is quite neceſſary, in order to allow for a "little relaxation in practice. The expreſſions "of the ſacred Writers are figurative; the "Eaſtern ſtyle is confeſſedly hyperbolical."

By theſe and other ſuch diſhoneſt ſhifts (by which however we ſeldom deceive ourſelves, except it be in thinking that we deceive others) the pure but ſtrong morality of the word of God is explained away, and its too rigid canons are ſoftened down, with as much dexterity as is exhibited by thoſe who practiſe a logic of the ſame complexion, in order to eſcape from the obligations of human ſtatutes. Like Swift's unfortunate Brothers *, we are ſometimes put to difficul-

* Vide Tale of a Tub.

ties,

ties, but our ingenuity is little inferior to their's. If totidem verbis * will not ſerve our turn, try totidem ſyllabis; if totidem ſyllabis fail, try totidem literis: then there is in our caſe, as well as in theirs, "an allegorical ſenſe" to be adverted to; and if every other reſource fail us, we come at laſt to the ſame concluſion as the Brothers adopted, that after all, thoſe rigorous clauſes require ſome allowance, and a favourable interpretation, and ought to be underſtood "cum grano "ſalis."

But when the law both in its ſpirit and its letter is obſtinate and incorrigible, what we cannot bend to our purpoſe we muſt break—"Our ſins "we hope are of the ſmaller order; a little "harmleſs gallantry, a little innocent jollity, a "few fooliſh expletives which we uſe from the "mere force of habit, meaning nothing by them; "a little warmth of colouring and licence of ex-"preſſion; a few freedoms of ſpeech in the "gaiety of our hearts, which, though not per-"haps ſtrictly correct, none but the over-rigid "would think of treating any otherwiſe than as "venial infirmities, and in which very grave and "religious men will often take their ſhare, "when they may throw off their ſtate, and re-"lax without impropriety. We ſerve an all-"merciful Being, who knows the frailty of our "nature, the number and ſtrength of our "temptations, and will not be extreme to mark "what is done amiſs. Even the leſs lenient ju-"dicatures of human inſtitution concede ſome-"what to the weakneſs of man. It is an eſta-"bliſhed maxim—'De minimis non curat lex.' "We hope we are not worſe than the generality.

* Vide Tale of a Tub.

"All

"All men are imperfect. We own we have our "infirmities; we confeſs it is ſo; we wiſh we "were better, and truſt as we grow older we "ſhall become ſo; we are ready to acknowledge "that we muſt be indebted for our admiſſion "into a future ſtate of happineſs, not to our own "merit, but to the clemency of God, and the "mercy of our Redeemer."

But let not this language be miſtaken for that of true Chriſtian humiliation, of which it is the very eſſence to feel the burden of ſin, and to long to be releaſed from it: nor let two things be confounded, than which none can be more fundamentally different, the allowed want of univerſality in our determination, and our endeavour to obey the will of God, and that defective accompliſhment of our purpoſes, which even the beſt of men will too often find reaſon to deplore. In the perſons of whom we have been now ſpeaking, the unconcern with which they can amuſe themſelves upon the borders of ſin, and the eaſy familiarity with which they can actually dally with it in its leſs offenſive ſhapes, ſhew plainly that, diſtinctly from its conſequences, it is by no means the object of their averſion; that there is no love of holineſs as ſuch; no endeavour to acquire it, no care to prepare the ſoul for the reception of this divine principle, and to expel or keep under whatever might be likely to obſtruct its entrance, or diſpute its ſovereignty.

It is indeed a moſt lamentable conſequence of the practice of regarding Religion as a compilation of ſtatutes, and not as an internal principle, that it ſoon comes to be conſidered as being converſant about *external actions* rather than about *habits of mind*. This ſentiment ſometimes has

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even the hardineſs to inſinuate and maintain itſelf under the guiſe of extraordinary concern for *practical Religion;* but it ſoon diſcovers the falſehood of this pretenſion, and betrays its real nature. The expedient indeed of attaining to ſuperiority in practice, by not waſting any of the attention on the internal principles from which alone practice can flow, is about as reaſonable, and will anſwer about as well, as the œconomy of the architect, who ſhould account it mere prodigality to expend any of his materials in laying foundations, from an idea that they might be more uſefully applied to the raiſing of the ſuperſtructure. We know what would be the fate of ſuch an edifice.

It is indeed true, and a truth never to be forgotten, that all pretenſions to internal principles of holineſs are vain when they are contradicted by the conduct; but it is no leſs true, that the only effectual way of improving the latter, is by a vigilant attention to the former. It was therefore our bleſſed Saviour's injunction, "Make the "tree good" as the neceſſary means of obtaining good fruit; and the holy Scriptures abound in admonitions, to let it be our chief buſineſs to cultivate our hearts with all diligence, to examine into their ſtate with impartiality, and watch over them with continual care. Indeed it is the *Heart* which conſtitutes the *Man;* and external actions derive their whole character and meaning from the motives and diſpoſitions of which they are the indications. Human judicatures, it is true, are chiefly converſant about the former, but this is only becauſe to our limited perceptions the latter can ſeldom be any otherwiſe clearly aſcertained. The real object of inquiry to human judicatures is the *internal* diſpoſition;

fition; it is to this that they adapt the nature, and proportion the degree, of their puniſhments.

Yet though this be a truth ſo obvious, ſo eſtabliſhed, that to have inſiſted on it may ſeem almoſt needleſs; it is a truth of which we are apt to loſe ſight in the review of our religious Character, and with which the *habit*, of conſidering Religion as conſiſting rather in external actions, than internal principles, is at direct and open war. This mode of judging may well be termed *habitual*: for though by ſome perſons it is adviſedly adopted, and openly avowed, yet in many caſes for want of due watchfulneſs, it has ſtolen inſenſibly upon the mind; it exiſts unſuſpected, and is practiſed, like other habits, without conſciouſneſs or obſervation.

In what degree ſoever this pernicious principle prevails, in that degree is the miſchief it produces. The vicious affections, like noxious weeds, ſprout up and increaſe of themſelves but too naturally; while the graces of the Chriſtian temper, exotics in the ſoil of the human heart, like the more tender productions of the vegetable world, though the light and breath of Heaven muſt quicken them, require on our part alſo, in order to their being preſerved in health and vigour, conſtant ſuperintendence and aſſiduous care. But ſo far from their being earneſtly ſought for, or watchfully reared, with unremitted prayers for that Divine Grace, without which all our labours muſt be ineffectual; ſuch is the reſult of the principle we are here condemning, that no endeavours are uſed for their attainment, or they are ſuffered to droop and die almoſt without an effort to preſerve them. The culture of the mind is leſs and leſs attended to, and

and at length perhaps is almoſt wholly neglected. Way being thus made for the unobſtructed growth of other tempers, the qualities of which are very different, and often directly oppoſite; theſe naturally overſpread and quietly poſſeſs the mind; their contrariety to the Chriſtian ſpirit not being diſcerned, and even perhaps their preſence being ſcarcely acknowledged, except when their exiſtence and their nature are manifeſted in the conduct by marks too plain to be overlooked or miſtaken.

Some of the moſt important branches of the Chriſtian temper, wherein the bulk of nominal Chriſtians appear eminently and allowedly defective, have been already noticed in this and in the preceding chapter. Many others ſtill remain to be particularized.

Firſt then, it is the comprehenſive compendium of the character of true Chriſtians, that "they are walking by faith, and not by ſight." By this deſcription is meant, not merely that they ſo firmly believe in the doctrine of future rewards and puniſhments, as to be influenced by that perſuaſion to adhere in the main to the path of duty, though tempted to forſake it by preſent intereſt, and preſent gratification; but farther, that the great truths revealed in Scripture concerning the unſeen world, are the ideas for the moſt part uppermoſt in their thoughts, and about which habitually their hearts are moſt intereſted. This ſtate of mind contributes, if the expreſſion may be allowed, to rectify the illuſions of viſion, to bring forward into nearer view thoſe eternal things which from their remoteneſs are apt to be either wholly overlooked, or to appear but faintly in the utmoſt bounds of the horizon; and to remove backward, and reduce

duce to their true comparative dimenſions, the objects of the preſent life, which are apt to fill the human eye, aſſuming a falſe magnitude from their vicinity. The true Chriſtian knows from experience however, that the former are apt to fade from the ſight, and the latter again to ſwell on it. He makes it therefore his continual care to preſerve thoſe juſt and enlightened views, which through Divine mercy he has obtained. Not that he will retire from that ſtation in the world which Providence ſeems to have appointed him to fill: he will be active in the buſineſs of life, and enjoy its comforts with moderation and thankfulneſs; but he will not be "totus in illis," he will not give up his whole ſoul to them, they will be habitually ſubordinate in his eſtimation to objects of more importance. The awful truth has ſunk deep into his mind, "the things which "are ſeen are temporal, but the things which "are not ſeen are eternal;" and in the tumult and buſtle of life, he is ſobered by the ſtill ſmall voice which whiſpers to him "the faſhion of "this world paſſes away." This circumſtance alone muſt, it is obvious, conſtitute a vaſt difference between the habitual temper of his mind, and that of the generality of nominal Chriſtians, who are almoſt entirely taken up with the concerns of the preſent world. They *know* indeed that they are mortal, but they do not *feel* it. The truth reſts in their underſtandings, and cannot gain admiſſion into their hearts. This ſpeculative perſuaſion is altogether different from that ſtrong *practical* impreſſion of the infinite importance of eternal things, which attended with a proportionate ſenſe of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of all below, while it prompts to activity from a conviction that "the night cometh

"when

" when no man can work," produces a certain firmneſs of texture, which hardens us againſt the buffets of fortune, and prevents our being very deeply penetrated by the cares and intereſts, the goods or evils, of this tranſitory ſtate. Thus this juſt impreſſion of the relative value of temporal and eternal things, maintains in the ſoul a dignified compoſure through all the viciſſitudes of life. It quickens our diligence, yet moderates our ardour; urges us to juſt purſuits, yet checks any undue ſolicitude about the ſucceſs of them, and thereby enables us, in the language of Scripture, " to uſe this world as not " abuſing it," rendering us at once beneficial to others and comfortable to ourſelves.

But this is not all—beſides the diſtinction between the nominal and the real Chriſtian, which reſults from the impreſſions produced on them reſpectively by the *eternal duration* of heavenly things, there is another grounded on their *nature*, no leſs marked, nor leſs important. They are ſtated in Scripture, not only as entitling themſelves to the notice of the true Chriſtian from conſiderations of intereſt, but as approving themſelves to his judgment from a conviction of their excellence, and yet farther, as recommending themſelves to his feelings, by their being ſuited to the renewed diſpoſitions of his heart. Indeed were the caſe otherwiſe, did not their qualities correſpond with his inclinations; however he might endure them on principles of duty, and be coldly conſcious of their ſuperior worth, he could not lend himſelf to them with cordial complacency, much leſs look to them as the ſureſt ſource of pleaſure. But this is the light in which they are habitually regarded by the true Chriſtian. He walks in the ways of Religion,

gion, not by conſtraint, but willingly; they are to him not only ſafe, but comfortable; "ways "of pleaſantneſs as well as of peace." Not but that here alſo he is from experience aware of the neceſſity of conſtant ſupport, and continual watchfulneſs; without theſe, his old eſtimate of things is apt to return on him, and the former objects of his affections to reſume their influence. With earneſt prayers, therefore, for the Divine Help, with jealous circumſpection, and reſolute ſelf-denial, he guards againſt, and abſtains from, whatever might be likely again to darken his *enlightened judgment*, or to vitiate his reformed taſte; thus making it his unwearied endeavour to grow in the knowledge and love of heavenly things, and to obtain a warmer admiration, and a more cordial reliſh of their excellence.

That this is a juſt repreſentation of the habitual judgment, and of the leading diſpoſition of true Chriſtians, will be abundantly evident, if, endeavouring to form ourſelves after our proper model, we conſult the ſacred Scripture. But in vain are Chriſtians there repreſented as having ſet their *affections* on things above, as *cordially rejoicing* in the ſervice, and delighting in the worſhip of God. Pleaſure and Religion are contradictory terms with the bulk of nominal Chriſtians. They may look back indeed on their religious offices with ſomething of a ſecret ſatisfaction, and even feel it during the performance of them, from the idea of being engaged in the diſcharge of a duty; but this is altogether different from the pleaſure which attends an employment in itſelf acceptable and grateful to us. The writer muſt here again guard againſt being underſtood to ſpeak of a deficiency in the *warmth* and

and *vehemence* merely of religious affections. Are the ſervice and worſhip of God *pleaſant* to theſe perſons? it is not aſked whether they are *delightful*. Do they diffuſe over the ſoul any thing of that calm complacency, that mild and grateful compoſure, which beſpeaks a mind in good humour with itſelf and all around it, and engaged in a ſervice ſuited to its taſte, and congenial with its feelings?

Let us appeal to that Day which is eſpecially devoted to the offices of Religion: Do they joyfully avail themſelves of this bleſſed opportunity of withdrawing from the buſineſs and cares of life; when, without being diſquieted by any doubt whether they are not neglecting the duties of their proper callings, they may be allowed to detach their minds from earthly things, that by a fuller knowledge of heavenly objects, and a more habitual acquaintance with them, their hope may grow more "full of immortality?" Is the day cheerfully devoted to thoſe holy exerciſes for which it was appointed? Do they indeed "come into the courts of God with gladneſs?" And how are they employed when not engaged in the public ſervices of the day? Are they buſied in ſtudying the word of God, in meditating on his perfections, in tracing his providential diſpenſations, in admiring his works, in revolving his mercies, (above all, the tranſcendent mercies of redeeming love) in ſinging his praiſes, "and ſpeaking good of his name?" Do their ſecret retirements witneſs the earneſtneſs of their prayers and the warmth of their thankſgivings, their diligence and impartiality in the neceſſary work of ſelf-examination, their mindfulneſs of the benevolent duty of interceſſion? Is the kind purpoſe of the inſtitution of a

Sabbath

Sabbath anſwered by them, in its being made to their ſervants and dependents a ſeaſon of reſt and comfort? Does the inſtruction of their families, or of the more poor and ignorant of their neighbours, poſſeſs its due ſhare of their time? If bleſſed with talents or with affluence, are they ſedulouſly employing a part of this interval of leiſure in relieving the indigent, and viſiting the ſick, and comforting the ſorrowful, in forming plans for the good of their fellow-creatures, in conſidering how they may promote both the temporal and ſpiritual benefit of their friends and acquaintance: or if their's be a larger ſphere, in deviſing meaſures whereby through the Divine bleſſing, they may become the honoured inſtruments of the more extended diffuſion of religious truth? In the hours of domeſtic or ſocial intercourſe, does their converſation manifeſt the ſubject of which their hearts are full? Do their language and demeanor ſhew them to be more than commonly gentle, and kind, and friendly, free from rough and irritating paſſions?

Surely an entire day ſhould not ſeem long amidſt theſe various employments. It might well be deemed a privilege thus to ſpend it, in the more immediate preſence of our Heavenly Father, in the exerciſes of humble admiration and grateful homage; of the benevolent, and domeſtic, and ſocial feelings, and of all the beſt affections of our nature, prompted by their true motives, converſant about their proper objects, and directed to their nobleſt end; all ſorrows mitigated, all cares ſuſpended, all fears repreſſed, every angry emotion ſoftened, every envious or revengeful or malignant paſſion expelled; and the boſom, thus quieted, purified, enlarged, ennobled,

ennobled, partaking almoſt of a meaſure of the Heavenly happineſs, and become for a while the ſeat of love, and joy, and confidence, and harmony.

The nature, and uſes, and proper employments of a Chriſtian Sabbath, have been pointed out more particularly, not only becauſe the day will be found, when thus employed, eminently conducive, through the Divine bleſſing, to the maintenance of the religious principle in activity and vigour; but alſo becauſe we muſt all have had occaſion often to remark, that many perſons, of the graver and more decent ſort, ſeem not ſeldom to be nearly deſtitute of religious reſources. The Sunday is with them, to ſay the beſt of it, a *heavy* day; and that larger part of it, which is not claimed by the public offices of the church, dully drawls on in comfortleſs vacuity, or without improvement is trifled away in vain and unprofitable diſcourſe. Not to ſpeak of thoſe who by their more daring profanation of this ſacred ſeaſon, openly violate the laws and inſult the religion of their country, how little do many ſeem to enter into the *ſpirit* of the inſtitution, who are not wholly inattentive to its exterior decorums! How glad are they to qualify the rigor of their religious labours! How hardly do they plead againſt being compelled to devote the *whole* of the day to Religion, claiming to themſelves no ſmall merit for giving up to it a part, and purchaſing therefore, as they hope, a right to ſpend the remainder more agreeably! How dexterouſly do they avail themſelves of any plauſible plea for introducing ſome week-day employment into the Sunday, whilſt they have not the ſame propenſity to introduce any of the Sunday's peculiar employment into the reſt of the

the week! How often do they find excuſes for taking journeys, writing letters, balancing accounts; or in ſhort doing ſomething, which by a little management might probably have been anticipated, or which, without any material inconvenience, might be poſtponed! Even buſineſs itſelf is recreation, compared with Religion, and from the drudgery of this day of Sacred Reſt they fly for relief to their ordinary occupations.

Others again who would conſider buſineſs as a prophanation, and who ſtill hold out againſt the encroachments of the card table, get over much of the day, and gladly ſeek for an innocent reſource, in the ſocial circle or in family viſits, where it is not even pretended that the converſation turns on ſuch topics as might render it in any way conducive to religious inſtruction, or improvement. Their families meanwhile are neglected, their ſervants robbed of Chriſtian privileges, and their example quoted by others, who cannot ſee that they are themſelves leſs religiouſly employed, while playing an innocent game at cards, or relaxing in the concert room.

But all theſe ſeveral artifices, *whatever they may be, to unhallow* the Sunday and to change its character (it might be almoſt ſaid "to relax its "horrors,") prove but too plainly, however we may be glad to take refuge in Religion, when driven to it by the loſs of every other comfort, and to retain as it were a reverſionary intereſt in an aſylum, which may receive us when we are forced from the tranſitory enjoyments of our preſent ſtate; that *in itſelf* it wears to us a gloomy and forbidding aſpect, and not a face of conſolation and joy; that the worſhip of God is with us a *conſtrained* and not a *willing* ſervice,

which

which we are glad therefore to abridge though we dare not omit it.

Some indeed there are who with concern and grief will confeſs this to be their uncomfortable and melancholy ſtate; who humbly pray, and diligently endeavour, for an imagination leſs diſtracted at devotional ſeaſons, for a heart more capable of reliſhing the excellence of divine things; and who carefully guard againſt whatever has a tendency to chain down their affections to earthly enjoyments. Let not ſuch be diſcouraged. It is not they whom we are condemning: but ſuch as knowing and even acknowledging this to be their caſe, yet proceed in a way directly contrary: who, ſcarcely ſeeming to ſuſpect that any thing is wrong with them, voluntarily acquieſce in a ſtate of mind which is directly contrary to the poſitive commands of God, which forms a perfect contraſt to the repreſentations given us in Scripture of the Chriſtian character, and accords but too faithfully in one leading feature with the character of thoſe, who are ſtated to be the objects of Divine diſpleaſure in this life, and of Divine puniſhment in the next.

It is not however only in theſe eſſential conſtituents of a devotional frame that the bulk of nominal Chriſtians are defective. This they freely declare (ſecretly feeling perhaps ſome complacency from the frankneſs of the avowal) to be a higher ſtrain of piety than that to which they aſpire. Their forgetfulneſs alſo of ſome of the leading diſpoſitions of Chriſtianity, is undeniably apparent in their allowed want of the ſpirit of kindneſs, and meekneſs, and gentleneſs, and patience, and long ſuffering; and above all, of that which is the ſtock on which alone theſe

diſpoſitions can grow and flouriſh, that *humility* and *lowlineſs of mind*, in which perhaps more than in any other quality may be ſaid to conſiſt the true eſſence and vital principle of the Chriſtian temper. Theſe diſpoſitions are not only neglected, but even diſavowed and exploded, and their oppoſites, if not riſing to any great height, are acknowledged and applauded. *A juſt pride*, *a proper and becoming pride*, are terms which we daily hear from Chriſtian lips. To poſſeſs *a high ſpirit*, to behave with *a proper ſpirit* when uſed ill,—by which is meant a quick feeling of injuries, and a promptneſs in reſenting them,—entitles to commendation; and a meek-ſpirited diſpoſition, the higheſt Scripture eulogium, expreſſes ideas of diſapprobation and contempt. Vanity and vain glory are ſuffered without interruption to retain their natural poſſeſſion of the heart. But here a topic opens upon us of ſuch importance, and on which ſo many miſtakes are to be found both in the writings of reſpectable authors, and in the commonly prevailing opinions of the world, that it may be allowed us to diſcuſs it more at large, and for this purpoſe to treat of it in a ſeparate ſection.

SECTION III.

On the Deſire of human Eſtimation and Applauſe—The generally prevailing Opinions contraſted with thoſe of the true Chriſtian.

THE deſire of human eſtimation, and diſtinction, and honour, of the admiration and applauſe

plauſe of our fellow creatures, if we take it in its full comprehenſion, and in all its various modifications, from the thirſt of glory to the dread of ſhame, is the paſſion of which the empire is by far the moſt general, and perhaps the authority the moſt commanding. Though its power be moſt conſpicuous and leaſt controulable in the higher claſſes of ſociety, it ſeems, like ſome reſiſtleſs conqueror, to ſpare neither age, nor ſex, nor condition; and taking ten thouſand ſhapes, inſinuating itſelf under the moſt ſpecious pretexts, and ſheltering itſelf when neceſſary under the moſt artful diſguiſes, it winds its way in ſecret, when it dares not openly avow itſelf, and mixes in all we think, and ſpeak, and do. It is in ſome inſtances the determined and declared purſuit, and confeſſedly the main practical principle; but where this is not the caſe, it is not ſeldom the grand ſpring of action, and in the Beauty and the Author, no leſs than in the Soldier, it is often the maſter paſſion of the ſoul.

This is the principle which parents recognize with joy in their infant offſpring, which is diligently inſtilled and nurtured in advancing years, which, under the names of honourable ambition and of laudable emulation, it is the profeſſed aim of ſchools and colleges to excite and cheriſh. The writer is well aware that it will be thought he is puſhing his opinions much too far, when he ventures to aſſail this great principle of human action; "a principle," its advocates might perhaps exclaim, "the extinction of "which, if you could ſucceed in your raſh at- "tempt, would be like the annihilation in the "material world of the principle of motion; "without it all were torpid and cold and com- "fortleſs. We grant," they might go on to

obſerve, "that we never ought to deviate from "the paths of duty in order to procure the ap- "plauſe or to avoid the reproaches of men, and "we allow that this is a rule too little attended "to in practice. We grant that the love of praiſe "is in ſome inſtances a ridiculous, and in others "a miſchievous paſſion; that to it we owe the "breed of coquettes and coxcombs, and, a "more ſerious evil, the noxious race of heroes "and conquerors. We too are ready, when it "appears in the ſhape of vanity, to ſmile at it "as a foible, or in that of falſe glory, to con- "demn it as a crime. But all theſe are only its "perverſions; and on account of them to con- "tend againſt its true forms, and its legitimate "exerciſe, were to give into the very error "which you formerly yourſelf condemned, of "arguing againſt the uſe of a ſalutary principle "altogether, on account of its being liable to "occaſional abuſe. When turned into the "right direction, and applied to its true pur- "poſes, it prompts to every dignified and gene- "rous enterpriſe. It is erudition in the portico, "ſkill in the lycæum, eloquence in the ſenate, "victory in the field. It forces indolence into "activity, and extorts from vice itſelf the deeds "of generoſity and virtue. When once the "ſoul is warmed by its generous ardor, no dif- "ficulties deter, no dangers terrify, no labours "tire. It is this which, giving by its ſtamp to "what is virtuous and honourable its juſt ſupe- "riority over the gifts of birth and fortune, "reſcues the rich from a baſe ſubjection to the "pleaſures of ſenſe, and makes them prefer a "courſe of toil and hardſhip to a life of indul- "gence and eaſe. It prevents the man of rank "from acquieſcing in his hereditary greatneſs,

"and

" and ſpurs him forward in purſuit of *perſonal*
" diſtinction, and of a nobility which he may
" juſtly term his own. It moderates and quali-
" fies the over-great inequalities of human con-
" ditions; and reaching to thoſe who are above
" the ſphere of laws, and extending to caſes
" which fall not within their province, it limits
" and circumſcribes the power of the tyrant on
" his throne, and gives gentleneſs to war, and
" to pride, humility.

" Nor is its influence confined to public life,
" nor is it known only in the great and the
" ſplendid. To it is to be aſcribed a large por-
" tion of that courteſy and diſpoſition to pleaſe,
" which naturally producing a mutual appear-
" ance of good will, and a reciprocation of good
" offices, conſtitute much of the comfort of
" private life, and give their choiceſt ſweets to
" ſocial and domeſtic intercourſe. Nay, from
" the force of habit, it follows us even into ſo-
" litude, and in our moſt ſecret retirements we
" often act as if our conduct were ſubject to hu-
" man obſervation, and we derive no ſmall com-
" placency from the imaginary applauſes of an
" ideal ſpectator."

So far of the *effects* of the love of praiſe and diſtinction: and if after enumerating ſome of theſe, you ſhould proceed to inveſtigate its *nature*, " We admit," it might be added, " that a
" haſty and misjudging world often miſapplies
" commendations and cenſures: and whilſt we
" therefore confeſs, that the praiſes of the diſ-
" cerning few are alone truly valuable; we ac-
" knowledge that it were better if mankind
" were always to act from the ſenſe of right and
" the love of virtue, without reference to the
" opinions of their fellow-creatures. We even
" allow,

" allow, that independently of conſequences, " this were perhaps in itſelf a higher ſtrain of " virtue; but it is a degree of purity which it " would be vain to expect from the bulk of " mankind. When the *intrinſic excellence* of this " principle however is called in queſtion, let it " be remembered, that in its higher degrees it " was ſtyled, by one who meant rather to de- " tract from its merits than to aggravate them, " 'the infirmity of *noble* minds;' and ſurely, " that in ſuch a ſoil it moſt naturally ſprings up, " and flouriſhes, is no mean proof of its ex- " alted origin and generous nature.

" But were theſe more dubious, and were it " no more than a ſplendid error; yet conſider- " ing that it works ſo often in the right direc- " tion, it were enough to urge in its behalf, that " it is a principle of real *action*, and approved " energy. That, as much as practice is better " than theory, and ſolid realties than empty " ſpeculation, ſo much is it to be preferred for " general uſe before thoſe higher principles of " morals, which however juſt and excellent in " themſelves, you would in vain attempt to " bring home to the 'buſineſs and boſoms of " mankind' at large. Reject not then a princi- " ple thus univerſal in its influence, thus va- " luable in its effects; a principle, which, by " whatever name you may pleaſe to call it, acts " by motives and conſiderations ſuited to our " condition; and which, putting it at the very " loweſt, muſt be confeſſed, in our preſent in- " firm ſtate, to be an habitual aid and an ever " preſent ſupport to the feebleneſs of virtue! In " a ſelfiſh world it produces the effects of diſin- " tereſtedneſs, and when public ſpirit is extinct, " it ſupplies the want of patriotiſm. Let us

" therefore

" therefore with gratitude avail ourſelves of its " help, and not relinquiſh the good which it " freely offers, from we know not what vain " dreams of impracticable purity and unattain- " able perfection."

All this and much more might be urged by the advocates of this favourite principle. It would be however no difficult taſk to ſhew that it by no means merits this high eulogium. To ſay nothing of that larger part of the argument of our opponents, which betrays, and even proceeds upon, that miſchievous notion of the innocence of error, againſt which we have already entered our formal proteſt, the principle in queſtion is manifeſtly of a moſt inconſtant and variable nature; as inconſtant and variable as the innumerably diverſified modes of faſhions, habits, and opinions in different periods and ſocieties. What it tolerates in one age, it forbids in another; what in one country it preſcribes and applauds, in another it condemns and ſtigmatizes! Obviouſly and openly, it often takes vice into its patronage, and ſets itſelf in direct oppoſition to virtue. It is calculated to produce rather the *appearance* than the *reality* of excellence; and at beſt not to check the *love* but only the *commiſſion* of vice. Much of this indeed was ſeen and acknowledged by the philoſophers, and even by the poets, of the Pagan world. They declaimed againſt it as a mutable and inconſiſtent principle; they lamented the fatal effects which, under the name of falſe glory, it had produced on the peace and happineſs of mankind. They condemned the purſuit of it when it led its followers out of the path of virtue, and taught that the praiſe of the wiſe and of the good only was to be deſired.

But

But it was reſerved for the page of Scripture to point out to us diſtinctly, wherein it is apt to be eſſentially defective and vicious, and to diſcover to us more fully its encroaching nature and dangerous tendencies; teaching us at the ſame time, how, being purified from its corrupt qualities, and reduced under juſt ſubordination, it may be brought into legitimate exerciſe, and be directed to its true end.

In the ſacred volume we are throughout reminded, that we are originally the creatures of God's formation, and continual dependents on his bounty. There too we learn the painful leſſon of man's degradation and unworthineſs. We learn that humiliation and contrition are the tempers of mind beſt ſuited to our fallen condition, and moſt acceptable in the ſight of our Creator. We learn that theſe (to the repreſſion and extinction of that ſpirit of arrogance and ſelf-importance, ſo natural to the heart of man) it ſhould be our habitual care to cheriſh and cultivate; ſtudiouſly maintaining a continual ſenſe, that, not only for all the *natural* advantages over others which we may poſſeſs, but that for all our *moral* ſuperiority alſo, we are altogether indebted to the unmerited goodneſs of God. It might perhaps be ſaid to be the great end and purpoſe of all revelation, and eſpecially to be the deſign of the Goſpel, to reclaim us from our natural pride and ſelfiſhneſs, and their fatal conſequences; to bring us to a juſt ſenſe of our weakneſs and *depravity*; and to diſpoſe us, with unfeigned humiliation, to abaſe ourſelves, and give glory to God. "No fleſh may glory in his "preſence; he that glorieth, let him glory in "the Lord"—"The lofty looks of man ſhall "be humbled, and the haughtineſs of men

"ſhall

" ſhall be bowed down, and the Lord alone " ſhall be exalted *."

Theſe ſolemn admonitions are too generally diſregarded, and their intimate connection with the ſubject we are now conſidering, appears to have been often entirely overlooked, even by Chriſtian moraliſts. Theſe authors, without reference to the main ſpring, and internal principle of conduct, are apt to ſpeak of the love of human applauſe, as being meritorious or culpable, as being the deſire of true or of falſe glory, accordingly as the external actions it produces, and the purſuits to which it prompts, are beneficial or miſchievous to mankind. But it is undeniably manifeſt, that in the judgment of the word of God, the love of worldly admiration and applauſe is in its *nature* eſſentially and radically corrupt; ſo far as it partakes of a diſpoſition to exalt and aggrandize ourſelves, to pride ourſelves on our natural or acquired endowments, or to aſſume to ourſelves the merit and credit of our good qualities, inſtead of aſcribing all the honour and glory where only they are due. Its *guilt* therefore in theſe caſes, is not to be meaſured by its effects on the happineſs of mankind; nor is it to be denominated *true or falſe* glory, accordingly as the ends to which it is directed are beneficial or miſchievous, juſt or unjuſt objects of purſuit; but it is *falſe*, becauſe it exalts that which ought to be abaſed, and *criminal*, becauſe it encroaches on the prerogative of God.

The Scriptures further inſtruct us, not merely that mankind are liable to error, and therefore that the world's commendations *may be* ſome-

* Iſaiah, ii. 11.

times miſtaken; but that their judgment being darkened and their hearts depraved, its applauſes and contempt will for the moſt part be ſyſtematically miſplaced; that though the beneficent and diſintereſted ſpirit of Chriſtianity, and her obvious tendency to promote domeſtic comfort and general happineſs, cannot but extort applauſe; yet that her aſpiring after more than ordinary excellence, by exciting ſecret miſgivings in others, or a painful ſenſe of inferiority not unmixed with envy, cannot fail often to diſguſt and offend. The word of God teaches us, that though ſuch of the doctrines and precepts of Chriſtianity, as are coincident with worldly intereſts and purſuits, and with worldly principles and ſyſtems, may be profeſſed without offence; yet, that what is oppoſite to theſe, or even different from them, will be deemed needleſsly preciſe and ſtrict, the indulgence of a moroſe and gloomy humour, the ſymptoms of a contracted and ſuperſtitious ſpirit, the marks of a mean, enſlaved, or diſtorted underſtanding. That for theſe and other reaſons, the follower of Chriſt muſt not only make up his mind to the *occaſional relinquiſhment* of worldly favour, but that it ſhould even afford him matter of holy jealouſy and ſuſpicion of himſelf, when it is very laviſhly and very generally beſtowed.

But though the ſtandard of worldly eſtimation differed leſs from that of the Goſpel; yet ſince our affections ought to be ſet on heavenly things, and converſant about heavenly objects; and ſince in particular the love and favour of God ought to be the matter of our ſupreme and habitual deſire, to which every other ſhould be ſubordinated; it follows, that the love of human applauſe muſt be manifeſtly injurious, ſo far

far as it tends to draw down our regards to earthly concerns, and to bound and circumſcribe our deſires within the narrow limits of this world. Particularly, that it is *impure*, ſo far as it is tinctured with a diſpoſition to eſtimate too highly, and love too well, the good opinion and commendations of man.

But though, by theſe and other inſtructions and conſiderations, the Holy Scripture warns us againſt the inordinate deſire or earneſt purſuit of worldly eſtimation and honour; though it ſo greatly reduces their value, and prepares us for loſing them without ſurpriſe, and for relinquiſhing them with little reluctance: yet it teaches us, that Chriſtians in general are not only not called upon abſolutely and voluntarily to renounce or forego them; but that when, without our having ſolicitouſly ſought them, they are beſtowed on us for actions intrinſically good, we are to accept them as being intended by Providence, to be ſometimes, even in this diſorderly ſtate of things, a preſent ſolace, and a reward to virtue. Nay more, we are inſtructed, that in our general deportment, that in little particulars of conduct otherwiſe indifferent, that in the *circumſtances* and *manner* of performing actions in themſelves of a determined character and indiſpenſable obligation, (guarding however againſt the ſmalleſt degree of artifice or deceit) that by watching for opportunities of doing little kindneſſes, that by avoiding ſingularities, and even humouring prejudices, where it may be done without the ſlighteſt infringment on truth or duty, we ought to have a due reſpect and regard to the approbation and favour of men. Theſe however we ſhould not value, chiefly as they may adminiſter to our own gratification, but rather as furniſhing means

and

and inſtruments of influence, which we may turn to good account, by making them ſubſervient to the improvement and happineſs of our fellow creatures, and thus conducive to the *glory of God.* The remark is almoſt ſuperfluous, that on occaſions like theſe we muſt even watch our hearts with the moſt jealous care, leſt pride and ſelf love inſenſibly infuſe themſelves, and corrupt the purity of principles ſo liable to contract a taint.

Credit and reputation, in the judgment of the true Chriſtian, ſtand on ground not very different from riches; which he is not to prize highly, or to deſire and purſue with ſolicitude; but which, when they are allotted to him by the hand of Providence, he is to accept with thankfulneſs, and uſe with moderation; relinquiſhing them when it becomes neceſſary, without a murmur; guarding moſt circumſpectly, ſo long as they remain with him, againſt that ſenſual and ſelfiſh temper, and no leſs againſt that pride and wantonneſs of heart, which they are too apt to produce and cheriſh; thus conſidering them as in themſelves acceptable, but, from the infirmity of his nature, as highly dangerous poſſeſſions, and valuing them chiefly not as inſtruments of luxury or ſplendour, but as affording the means of honouring his heavenly Benefactor, and leſſening the miſeries of mankind.

Chriſtianity however, as was formerly obſerved, propoſes not to extinguiſh our natural deſires, but to bring them under juſt controul, and direct them to their true objects. In the caſe both of riches and of honour, ſhe maintains the conſiſtency of her character. While ſhe commands us not to ſet our hearts on *earthly* treaſures, ſhe reminds us that "we have in *Hea-*

"*ven*

"*ven* a better and more enduring ſubſtance" than this world can beſtow; and while ſhe repreſſes our ſolicitude reſpecting earthly credit, and moderates our attachment to it, ſhe holds forth to us, and bids us habitually to aſpire after, the ſplendours of that better ſtate, where is true glory, and honour, and immortality; thus exciting in us a juſt ambition, ſuited to our high origin, and worthy of our large capacities, which the little, miſplaced, and periſhable diſtinctions of this life would in vain attempt to ſatisfy.

It would be mere waſte of time to enter into any laboured argument to prove at large, that the light in which worldly credit and eſtimation are regarded, by the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians, is extremely different from that in which they are placed by the page of Scripture. The *inordinate* love of *worldly glory* indeed, implies a paſſion, which from the nature of things cannot be called into exerciſe in the generality of mankind, becauſe, being converſant about great objects, it can but rarely find that field which is requiſite for its exertions. But we every where diſcover the ſame principle reduced to the dimenſions of common life, and modified and directed according to every one's ſphere of action. We may diſcover it in a ſupreme love of diſtinction, and admiration, and praiſe; in the univerſal acceptableneſs of flattery; and above all in the exceſſive valuation of our worldly character, in that watchfulneſs with which it is guarded, in that jealouſy when it is queſtioned, in that ſolicitude when it is in danger, in that hot reſentment when it is attacked, in that bitterneſs of ſuffering when it is impaired or loſt. All theſe emotions, as they are too manifeſt to be diſputed,

puted, ſo are they too reputable to be denied. Diſhonour, diſgrace, and ſhame preſent images of horror too dreadful to be faced; they are evils, which it is thought the mark of a generous ſpirit to conſider as excluding every idea of comfort and enjoyment, and to feel, in ſhort, as too heavy to be borne.

The conſequences of all this are natural and obvious. Though it be not openly avowed, that we are to follow after worldly eſtimation, or to eſcape from worldly diſrepute, when they can only be purſued or avoided by declining from the path of duty; nay though the contrary be recognized as being the juſt opinion; yet all the effect of this ſpeculative conceſſion is ſoon done away *in fact*. Eſtimating worldly credit as of the higheſt intrinſic excellence, and worldly ſhame as the greateſt of all poſſible evils, we ſometimes ſhape and turn the path of duty itſelf from its true direction, ſo as it may favour our acquiſition of the one, and avoidance of the other; or when this cannot be done, we boldly and openly turn aſide from it, declaring the temptation is too ſtrong to be reſiſted.

It were eaſy to adduce numerous proofs of the truth of theſe aſſertions. It is proved, indeed, by that general tendency in Religion to conceal herſelf from the view, (for we might hope that in theſe caſes ſhe often is by no means altogether extinct) by her being apt to vaniſh from our converſations, and even to give place to a pretended licentiouſneſs of ſentiments and conduct, and a falſe ſhew of infidelity. It is proved, by that complying acquieſcence and participation in the habits and manners of this diſſipated age, which has almoſt confounded every externa diſtinction between the Chriſtian and the Infidel, and has made

made it ſo rare to find any one who dares incur the charge of Chriſtian ſingularity, or who can ſay with the Apoſtle that "he is not aſhamed of "the Goſpel of Chriſt." It is proved (how can this proof be omitted by one to whoſe lot it has ſo often fallen to witneſs and lament, ſometimes he fears to afford an inſtance of it?) by that quick reſentment, thoſe bitter contentions, thoſe angry retorts, thoſe malicious triumphs, that impatience of inferiority, that wakeful ſenſe of paſt defeats, and promptneſs to revenge them, which too often change the character of a Chriſtian deliberative Aſſembly, into that of a ſtage for prize fighters: violating at once the proprieties of public conduct, and the rules of ſocial decorum, and renouncing and chaſing away all the charities of the Religion of Jeſus!

But from all leſſer proofs, our attention is drawn to one of a ſtill larger ſize, and more determined character. Surely the reader will here anticipate our mention of the practice of Duelling: a practice which, to the diſgrace of a Chriſtian ſociety, has long been ſuffered to exiſt with little reſtraint or oppoſition.

This practice, whilſt it powerfully ſupports, mainly reſts on, that exceſſive over-valuation of character, which teaches that worldly credit is to be preſerved at *any* rate, and diſgrace at *any* rate to be avoided. The *unreaſonableneſs* of duelling has been often proved, and it has often been ſhewn to be criminal on various principles: ſometimes it has been oppoſed on grounds hardly tenable; particularly when it has been conſidered as an indication of malice and revenge *(a)*.

(a) Vide Hey's Tract, Rouſſeau's Eloiſa, and many periodical Eſſays and Sermons.

But

But it ſeems hardly to have been enough noticed in what chiefly conſiſts its *eſſential* guilt; that it is a deliberate preference of the favour of man, before the favour and approbation of God, *in articulo mortis*, in an inſtance, wherein our own life, and that of a fellow creature are at ſtake, and wherein we run the riſk of ruſhing into the preſence of our Maker in the very act of offending him. It would detain us too long, and it were ſomewhat beſide our preſent purpoſe, to enumerate the miſchievous conſequences which reſult from this practice. They are many and great; and if regard be had merely to the temporal intereſts of men, and to the well being of ſociety, they are but poorly counterbalanced by the plea, which muſt be admitted in its behalf by a candid obſerver of human nature, of a courteſy and refinement in our modern manners unknown to ancient times.

But there is one obſervation which muſt not be omitted, and which ſeems to have been too much overlooked: In the judgment of that Religion which requires purity of heart, and of that Being to whom, as was before remarked, "thought is action," he cannot be eſteemed innocent of this crime, who lives in a ſettled habitual determination to commit it, when circumſtances ſhall call upon him ſo to do *. This is a conſideration which places the crime of duelling on a different footing from almoſt any other; indeed there is perhaps NO other, which mankind habitually and deliberately reſolve to practiſe whenever the temptation ſhall occur. It ſhews alſo that the crime of duelling is far more

* Vide "Whoſoever looketh on a woman to luſt after her, hath committed adultery with her, &c." Matt. v. 28.

general

general in the higher claſſes than is commonly ſuppoſed, and that the whole ſum of the guilt which the practice produces is great, beyond what has perhaps been ever conceived! It will be the writer's comfort to have ſolemnly ſuggeſted this conſideration, to the conſciences of thoſe by whom this impious practice might be ſuppreſſed: If ſuch there be, which he is ſtrongly inclined to believe, their's is the crime, and their's the reſponſibility of ſuffering it to continue *(a)*.

In the foregoing obſervations, it has not been the writer's intention to diſcuſs completely that copious ſubject, the love of worldly eſtimation. It would be to exceed the limits of a work like this, fully to inveſtigate ſo large, and at the ſame time ſo important a topic. Enough however may have perhaps been ſaid, to make it evident that this principle is of a character highly *queſtionable*; that it ſhould be brought under abſolute ſubjection, and watched with the moſt jealous care: That, notwithſtanding its lofty pretenſions, it often can by no means juſtly boaſt that high origin and exalted nature, which its ſuperficial admirers are diſpoſed to concede to it. What real intrinſic eſſential value, it might

(a) The writer cannot omit this opportunity of declaring, that he ſhould long ago have brought this ſubject before the notice of Parliament, but for a perfect conviction that he ſhould probably thereby only give encouragement to a ſyſtem he wiſhes to ſee at an end. The practice has been at different periods nearly ſtopped by poſitive laws, in various nations on the Continent; and there can be little doubt of the efficacy of what has been more than once ſuggeſted—a Court of Honour, to take cognizance of ſuch offences as would naturally fall within its province. The effects of this eſtabliſhment would doubtleſs require to be enforced by legiſlative proviſions, directly puniſhing the practice; and by diſcouraging at court, and in the military and naval ſituations, all who ſhould directly or indirectly be guilty of it.

be

be aſked, does there appear to be in a virtue, which had wholly changed its nature and character, if public opinion had been different? But it is in truth of baſe extraction, and ungenerous qualities, ſpringing from ſelfiſhneſs and vanity, and low ambition; by theſe it ſubſiſts, and thrives, and acts; and envy, and jealouſy, and detraction, and hatred, and variance, are its too faithful and natural aſſociates. It is, to ſay the beſt of it, a root which bears fruits of a poiſonous as well as of a beneficial quality. If it ſometimes ſtimulates to great and generous enterpriſes, if it urges to induſtry, and ſometimes to excellence, if in the more contracted ſphere it produces courteſy and kindneſs; yet to its account we muſt place the ambition which deſolates nations, and many of the competitions and reſentments which interrupt the harmony of ſocial life. The former indeed has been often laid to its charge, but the latter have not been ſufficiently attended to; and ſtill leſs has its *noxious* influence on the vital principle, and diſtinguiſhing graces of the Chriſtian character, been duly pointed out and enforced.

To read indeed the writings of certain Chriſtian moraliſts, *(a)* and to obſerve how little they ſeem diſpoſed to call it in queſtion, except where it raves in the conqueror, one ſhould be almoſt tempted to ſuſpect; that, conſidering it as a principle of ſuch potency and prevalence, as that they muſt deſpair of bringing it into juſt ſubjection, they were intent only on complimenting it into good humour (like thoſe barbarous nations which worſhip the evil Spirit through

(a) Vide, in particular a paper in the Guardian, by ADDISON, on Honour, Vol. ii.

fear;)

fear;) or rather, that they were making a ſort of compoſition with an enemy they could not maſter, and were willing, on condition of its giving up the trade of war, to ſuffer it to rule undiſturbed, and range at pleaſure.

But the truth is, that the reaſonings of Chriſtian moraliſts too often exhibit but few traces of the genius of Chriſtian morality. Of this poſition, the caſe before us is an inſtance. This principle of the deſire of worldly diſtinction and applauſe, is often allowed, and even commended, with too few qualifications, and too little reſerve. To covet wealth is baſe and ſordid, but to covet honour is treated as the mark of a generous and exalted nature. Theſe writers ſcarcely ſeem to bear in mind, that though the principle in queſtion tends to prevent the commiſſion of thoſe groſſer acts of vice which would injure us in the general eſtimation; yet that it not only ſtops there, but that it there begins to exert almoſt an equal force in the oppoſite direction. They do not conſider how apt this principle is, even in the caſe of thoſe who move in a contracted ſphere, to fill us with vain conceits, and vicious paſſions; and above all how it tends to fix the affections on earthly things, and to ſteal away the heart from God. They acknowledge it to be criminal when it produces miſchievous effects, but forget how apt it is, by the ſubſtitution of a falſe and corrupt motive, to vitiate the purity of our good actions, depriving them of all which rendered them truly and eſſentially valuable. That, not to be too haſtily approved, becauſe it takes the ſide of virtue, it often works her ruin while it aſſerts her cauſe, and like ſome vile ſeducer, pretends affection only the more ſurely to betray.

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It is the diſtinguiſhing glory of Chriſtianity not to reſt ſatisfied with ſuperficial appearances, but to rectify the *motives*, and purify the *heart*. The true Chriſtian, in obedience to the leſſons of Scripture, no where keeps over himſelf a more reſolute and jealous guard, than where the deſire of human eſtimation and diſtinction is in queſtion. No where does he more deeply feel the inſufficiency of his unaſſiſted ſtrength, or more diligently and earneſtly pray for divine aſſiſtance. He may well indeed watch and pray againſt the encroachments of a paſſion, which, when ſuffered to tranſgreſs its juſt limits, diſcovers a peculiar hoſtility to the diſtinguiſhing graces of the Chriſtian temper; a paſſion which muſt inſenſibly acquire force, becauſe it is in continual exerciſe; to which almoſt every thing *without* adminiſters nutriment, and the growth of which *within* is favoured and cheriſhed by ſuch powerful auxiliaries as pride and ſelfiſhneſs, the natural and perhaps inexterminable inhabitants of the human heart; of which the predominance, if eſtabliſhed, is thus ſo pernicious, and which poſſeſſes ſo many advantages for effecting its eſtabliſhment.

Strongly impreſſed therefore with a ſenſe of the indiſpenſable neceſſity of guarding againſt the progreſs of this encroaching principle, in humble reliance on ſuperior aid, the true Chriſtian thankfully uſes the means, and habitually exerciſes himſelf in the conſiderations and motives, ſuggeſted to him for that purpoſe by the word of God. He is much occupied in ſearching out, and contemplating his own infirmities. He endeavours to acquire and maintain a juſt conviction of his great unworthineſs; and to keep in continual remembrance, that whatever

diſtinguiſhes

diſtinguiſhes himſelf from others, is not properly his own, but that he is altogether indebted for it to the undeſerved bounty of Heaven. He diligently endeavours alſo, habitually to preſerve a *juſt* ſenſe of the real worth of human diſtinction and applauſe, knowing that he ſhall covet them leſs when he has learned not to overrate their value. He labours to bear in mind, how undeſervedly they are often beſtowed, how precariouſly they are always poſſeſſed. The cenſures of good men juſtly render him ſuſpicious of himſelf, and prompt him carefully and impartially to examine into thoſe parts of his character, or thoſe particulars of his conduct, which have drawn on him their animadverſions. The favourable opinion and the praiſes of good men are juſtly acceptable to him, where they accord with the teſtimony of his own heart; that teſtimony being thereby confirmed and warranted. Thoſe praiſes favour alſo and ſtrengthen the growth of mutual confidence and affection, where it is his delight to form friendſhips, rich not leſs in uſe than comfort, and to eſtabliſh connections which may laſt for ever. But even in the caſe of the commendations of good men, he ſuffers not himſelf to be beguiled into an over-valuation of them, leſt he ſhould be led to ſubſtitute them in the place of conſcience. He guards againſt this by reflecting how indiſtinctly we can diſcern each other's motives, how little enter into each other's circumſtances, how miſtaken therefore may be the judgments formed of us, or of our actions, even by good men, and that it is far from improbable, that we may at ſome time be compelled to forfeit their eſteem, by adhering to the dictates of our own conſciences.

But

But if he endeavours thus to ſet looſe to the favour and applauſe even of good men, much more to thoſe of the world at large; not but that he is ſenſible of their worth as means and inſtruments of uſefulneſs and influence; and under the limitations and for the ends allowed in Scripture (theſe it is needleſs to repeat) he is glad to poſſeſs, obſervant to acquire, and careful to retain them. He conſiders them however, if we may again introduce the metaphor, like the precious metals, as having rather an exchangeable than an intrinſic value, as deſirable not ſimply in their poſſeſſion, but in their uſe. In this view, he holds himſelf to be reſponſible for that ſhare of them which he enjoys, and, to continue the figure, as bound not to let them lie by him unemployed, this were hoarding; not to laviſh them prodigally, this would be waſte; not imprudently to miſapply them, this were folly and caprice: but as under an obligation to regard them as conferred upon him that they might be brought into action, and as what therefore he may by no means throw away, though ready, if it be required, to relinquiſh them with cheerfulneſs; and never feeling himſelf at liberty, in conſideration of the uſe he intends to make of them, to acquire or retain them unlawfully. He holds it to be his bounden duty to ſeek diligently for occaſions of rendering them ſubſervient to their true purpoſes; and when any ſuch occaſion is found, to expend them cheerfully and liberally, but with diſcretion and frugality; being no leſs prudent in determining the meaſure, than in ſelecting the objects of their application, that they may go the farther by being thus managed with œconomy.

Acting

Acting therefore on theſe principles, he will ſtudiouſly and diligently uſe any degree of worldly credit he may enjoy, in removing or leſſening prejudices; in conciliating good-will, and thereby making way for the leſs obſtructed progreſs of truth; and in providing for its being entertained with candour, or even with favour, by thoſe who would bar all acceſs againſt it in any rougher or more homely form. He will make it his buſineſs to ſet on foot and forward benevolent and uſeful ſchemes; and where they require united efforts, to obtain and preſerve for them this co-operation. He will endeavour to diſcountenance vice, to bring modeſt merit into notice; to lend as it were his light to men of real worth, but of leſs creditable name, and perhaps of leſs conciliating qualities and manners; that they may thus ſhine with a reflected luſtre, and be uſeful in their turn, when inveſted with their juſt eſtimation. But while by theſe and various other means he ſtrives to render his reputation, ſo long as he poſſeſſes it, ſubſervient to the great ends of advancing the cauſe of Religion and Virtue, and of promoting the happineſs and comfort of mankind, he will not tranſgreſs the rule of the Scripture precepts in order to obtain, to cultivate, or to preſerve it, reſolutely diſclaiming that dangerous ſophiſtry of "doing evil that good may come." Ready however to relinquiſh his reputation when required ſo to do, he will not throw it away; and ſo far as he allowably may, he will cautiouſly avoid occaſions of diminiſhing it, inſtead of ſtudiouſly ſeeking, or needleſsly multiplying them, as ſeems ſometimes to have been the practice of worthy but imprudent men. There will be no capricious humours, no ſelfiſh tempers, no moroſeneſs,

roſeneſs, no diſcourteſy, no affected ſeverity of deportment, no peculiarity of language, no indolent neglect, or wanton breach, of the ordinary forms or faſhions of ſociety. His reputation is a poſſeſſion capable of uſes too important to be thus ſported away; if ſacrificed at all, it ſhall be ſacrificed at the call of duty. The world ſhall be conſtrained to allow him to be amiable, as well as reſpectable in other parts of his character; though in what regards Religion, they may account him unreaſonably preciſe and ſtrict. In this no leſs than in other particulars, he will endeavour to reduce the enemies of Religion to adopt the confeſſion of the accuſers of the Jewiſh ruler, "we ſhall not find any fault or "occaſion againſt this Daniel—except concern-"ing the law of his God:" and even there, if he give offence, it will only be where he dares not do otherwiſe; and if he fall into diſ-eſteem or diſgrace it ſhall not be chargeable to any conduct which is juſtly diſhonourable, or even to any unneceſſary ſingularities on his part, but to the falſe ſtandard of eſtimation of a misjudging world. When his character is thus miſtaken, or his conduct thus miſconſtrued, he will not wrap himſelf up in a myſterious ſullenneſs; but will be ready, where he thinks any one will liſten to him with patience and candour, to clear up what has been dubious, to explain what has been imperfectly known, and "ſpeaking the "truth in love" to correct, if it may be, the erroneous impreſſions which have been conceived of him. He may ſometimes feel it his duty publicly to vindicate his character from unjuſt reproach, and to repel the falſe charges of his enemies; but he will carefully however watch againſt being led away by pride, or being betrayed

trayed into ſome breach of truth or of Chriſtian charity, when he is treading in a path ſo dangerous. At ſuch a time he will alſo guard, with more than ordinary circumſpection, againſt any undue ſolicitude about his worldly reputation for its own ſake; and when he has done what duty requires for its vindication; he will ſit down with a peaceable and quiet mind, and it will be matter of no very deep concern to him if his endeavours ſhould have been ineffectual. If good men in every age and nation have been often unjuſtly calumniated and diſgraced, and if, in ſuch circumſtances, even the darkneſs of paganiſm has been able contentedly to repoſe itſelf on the conſciouſneſs of innocence, ſhall one who is cheered by the Chriſtian's hope, who is aſſured alſo, that a day will ſhortly come in which whatever is ſecret ſhall be made manifeſt, and the miſtaken judgments of men, perhaps even of good men, being corrected, that "he ſhall "then have praiſe of God;" ſhall ſuch an one, I ſay, ſink? ſhall he even bend or droop under ſuch a trial? They might be more excuſable in over-valuing human reputation to whom all beyond the grave was dark and cheerleſs They alſo might be more eaſily pardoned for purſuing with ſome degree of eagerneſs and ſolicitude that glory which might ſurvive them, thus ſeeking as it were to extend the narrow ſpan of their earthly exiſtence: but far different is our caſe, to whom theſe clouds are rolled away, and "life and immortality brought to "light by the Goſpel." Not but that worldly favour and diſtinction are amongſt the beſt things this world has to offer: but the Chriſtian knows it is the very condition of his calling, *not* to have his portion here; and as in the caſe of

any other earthly enjoyments, ſo in that alſo of worldly honour, he dreads, leſt his ſupreme affections being thereby gratified, it ſhould be hereafter ſaid to him "remember that thou in "thy life time receivedſt thy good things."

He is required by his holy calling to be victorious over the world; and to this victory, the conqueſt of the dread of its diſ-eſteem and diſhonour is eſſentially and indiſpenſably required. He reflects on thoſe holy men who "had trial of cruel mockings;" he remembers that our bleſſed Saviour himſelf "was deſpiſed "and rejected of men;" and what is he, that he ſhould be exempted from the common lot, or think it much to bear the ſcandal of his profeſſion? If therefore he is creditable and popular, he conſiders this, if the phraſe may be pardoned, as ſomething beyond his bargain; and he watches himſelf, with double care, leſt he ſhould grow over-fond of what he may be ſhortly called upon to relinquiſh. He meditates often on the probability of his being involved in ſuch circumſtances, as may render it neceſſary for him to ſubject himſelf to diſgrace and obloquy; thus familiarizing himſelf with them betimes, and preparing himſelf, that when the trying hour arrives they may not take him unawares.

But the cultivation of the deſire of "that "honour which cometh from God," he finds the moſt effectual means of bringing his mind into a proper temper, in what regards the love of human approbation. Chriſtian! would thou indeed reduce this affection under juſt controul —*ſurſum corda!* Riſe on the wings of contemplation, until the praiſes and the cenſures of men die away upon the ear, and the ſtill ſmall voice

voice of conſcience is no longer drowned by the din of this nether world. Here the ſight is apt to be occupied with earthly objects, and the hearing to be engroſſed with earthly ſounds; but there thou ſhalt come within the view of that reſplendent and incorruptible crown, which is held forth to thy acceptance in the realms of light, and thine ear ſhall be regaled with Heavenly melody! Here we dwell in a variable atmoſphere—the proſpect is at one time darkened by the gloom of diſgrace, and at another the eye is dazzled by the gleamings of glory: but thou haſt now aſcended above this inconſtant region; no ſtorms agitate, no clouds obſcure the air, and the lightnings play, and the thunders roll beneath thee.

Thus, at choſen ſeaſons, the Chriſtian exerciſes himſelf; and when, from this elevated region he deſcends into the plain below, and mixes in the buſtle of life, he ſtill retains the impreſſions of his more retired hours. By theſe he realizes to himſelf the unſeen world; he accuſtoms himſelf to ſpeak and act as in the preſence of "an innumerable company of angels, "and of the ſpirits of juſt men made perfect, "and of God the Judge of all;" the conſciouſneſs of *their* approbation cheers and gladdens his ſoul, under the ſcoffs and reproaches of an undiſcerning world, and to his delighted ear, their united praiſes form a *harmony* which a few diſcordant earthly voices cannot interrupt.

But though the Chriſtian be ſometimes enabled thus to triumph over the inordinate love of human applauſe, he does not therefore deem himſelf ſecure from its encroachments. On the contrary, he is aware, ſo ſtrong and active is its principle of vitality, that even where it ſeems

extinct, let but circumſtances favour its revival, and it will ſpring forth again in renewed vigour. And as his watch muſt thus during life know no termination, becauſe the enemy will ever be at hand; ſo it muſt be the more cloſe and vigilant, becauſe he is no where free from danger, but is on every ſide open to attack. "Sume ſuperbiam "quæſitam meritis," was the maxim of a worldly moraliſt: but the Chriſtian is aware, that he is particularly aſſailable where he really excels; there he is in eſpecial danger, leſt his motives, originally pure, being inſenſibly corrupted, he ſhould be betrayed into an anxiety about worldly favour, falſe in principle or exceſſive in degree, when he is endeavouring to render his virtue amiable and reſpected in the eyes of others, and in obedience to the Scripture injunction, is willing to let his "light ſo ſhine before men, that "they may ſee his good works, and glorify his "Father which is in heaven."

He watches himſelf alſo on ſmall as well as on great occaſions: the latter indeed, in the caſe of many perſons, can hardly ever be expected to occur, whereas the former are continually preſenting themſelves: and thus, whilſt on the one hand they may be rendered highly uſeful in forming and ſtrengthening a juſt habit of mind in the particular in queſtion; ſo, on the other, they are the means moſt at hand for enabling us to diſcover our own real character. Let not this be ſlightly paſſed over. If any one finds himſelf ſhrinking from diſrepute or diſeſteem in little inſtances; but apt to ſolace himſelf with the perſuaſion, that his ſpirits being fully called forth to the encounter, he could boldly ſtand the brunt of ſharper trials; let him be ſlow to give entertainment to ſo beguiling a ſuggeſtion; and

and let him not forget that theſe little inſtances, where no credit is to be got, and the vaineſt can find ſmall room for ſelf-complacency, furniſh perhaps the trueſt teſts whether we are aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt, and are willing, on principles really pure, to bear reproach for the name of Jeſus.

The Chriſtian too is well aware that the exceſſive deſire of human approbation is a paſſion of ſo ſubtile a nature, that there is nothing into which it cannot penetrate; and from much experience, learning to diſcover it where it would lurk unſeen, and to detect it under its more ſpecious diſguiſes, he finds, that elſewhere diſallowed and excluded, it is apt to inſinuate itſelf into his very religion, where it eſpecially delights to dwell, and obſtinately maintains its reſidence. Proud piety and oſtentatious charity, and all the more open effects it there produces, have been often condemned, and we may diſcover the tendencies to them in ourſelves, without difficulty. But where it appears not ſo large in bulk, and in ſhape ſo unambiguous, let its operation be ſtill ſuſpected. Let not the Chriſtian ſuffer himſelf to be deceived by any external diſſimilitudes between himſelf and the world around him, truſting perhaps to the ſincerity of the principle to which they originally owed their riſe; but let him beware leſt through the inſenſible encroachments of the ſubtle uſurper, his religion ſhould at length have "only a name to live," being gradually robbed of its vivifying principle; leſt he ſhould be mainly preſerved in his religious courſe by the dread of incurring the charge of levity, for quitting a path on which he had deliberately entered. Or where, on a ſtrict and impartial ſcrutiny of his governing motives, he

may

may fairly conclude this not to be the caſe, let him beware leſt he be influenced by this principle in particular parts of his character, and eſpecially where any external ſingularities are in queſtion; cloſely ſcrutinizing his apparent motives, leſt he ſhould be prompted to his more than ordinary religious obſervances, and be kept from participating in the licentious pleaſures of a diſſipated age, not ſo much by a vigorous principle of internal holineſs, as by a fear of leſſening himſelf in the good opinion of the ſtricter circle of his aſſociates, or of ſuffering even in the eſtimation of the world at large, by violating the proprieties of his aſſumed character.

To thoſe who, in the important particular which we have been ſo long diſcuſſing, wiſh to conform themſelves to the injunctions of the word of God, we muſt adviſe a laborious watchfulneſs, a jealous guard, a cloſe and frequent ſcrutiny of their own hearts, that they may not miſtake their real character, and too late find themſelves to have been miſtaken, as to what they had conceived to be their governing motives. Above all, let them labour, with humble prayers for the Divine aſſiſtance, to fix in themſelves a deep, habitual, and practical ſenſe of the excellence of "that honour which cometh "from God," and of the comparative worthleſſneſs of all earthly eſtimation and pre-eminence. In truth, unleſs the affections of the ſoul be thus predominantly engaged on the ſide of heavenly in preference to that of human honour, though we may have relinquiſhed the purſuit of fame, we ſhall not have acquired that firm contexture of mind, which can bear diſgrace and ſhame, without yielding to the preſſure. Between theſe two ſtates there is a wide interval,

interval, and he who, on a ſober review of his conduct and motives, finds reaſon to believe he has arrived at the one, muſt not therefore conclude he has reached the other. To the one, a little natural moderation and quietneſs of temper may be ſufficient to conduct us: but to the other, we can only attain by much diſcipline and ſlow advances; and when we think we have made great way, we ſhall often find reaſon to confeſs in the hour of trial, that we had greatly, far too greatly, over-rated our progreſs.

When engaged too in the proſecution of this courſe, we muſt be aware of the ſnares which lie in our way, and of the deceits to which we are liable: and we muſt be provided againſt theſe impoſitions, by having obtained a full and diſtinct conception of the temper of mind with regard to human favour, which is preſcribed to us in Scripture; and by continually examining our hearts and lives to aſcertain how far they correſpond with it. This will prevent our ſubſtituting contemplation in the place of action, and giving ourſelves too much up to thoſe religious meditations which were formerly recommended, in which we muſt not indulge to the neglect of the common *duties* of life: this will prevent our miſtaking the gratification of an indolent temper for the Chriſtian's diſregard of fame; for, never let it be forgotten, we muſt *deſerve* eſtimation, though we may not *poſſeſs* it, forcing men of the *world* to acknowledge, that we do not want their boaſted ſpring of action to ſet us in motion; but that its place is better ſupplied to us by another, which produces all the good of their's without its evil; thus demonſtrating the ſuperiority of the principle which animates us, by the ſuperior utility and excellence of its effects.

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This principle, in order to be pure and genuine, though nerved with more than mortal firmneſs, muſt be ſweetened by love, and tempered with humility. The former of theſe qualities will render us kind, friendly, and beneficent, preventing our being no longer on the watch to promote the happineſs or comfort of others, than whilſt we are ſtimulated by the deſire of their applauſe; the produce of which paſſion, whatever may be vaunted of its effects on ſocial intercourſe, is often nothing better than ſelfiſhneſs, but ill concealed under a ſuperficial covering of exterior courteſy.

Humility, again, reducing us in our own value, will moderate our claims on worldly eſtimation. It will check our tendency to oſtentation and diſplay, prompting us rather to avoid, than to attract notice. It will diſpoſe us to ſit down in quiet obſcurity, though, judging ourſelves impartially, we believe ourſelves better entitled to credit, than thoſe on whom it is conferred; cloſing the entrance againſt a proud, painful, and malignant paſſion, from which, under ſuch circumſtances, we can otherwiſe be hardly free, the paſſion of "high diſdain from ſenſe of in-"jured merit."

Love and humility will concur in producing a frame of mind, not more diſtinct from an ardent thirſt of glory, than from that frigid diſregard, or inſolent contempt, or oſtentatious renunciation of human favour and diſtinction, which we have ſometimes ſeen oppoſed to it. Theſe latter qualities may not unfrequently be traced to a ſlothful, ſenſual, and ſelfiſh temper; to the conſciouſneſs of being unequal to any great and generous attempts; to the diſappointment of ſchemes of ambition or of glory; to a little perſonal

ſonal experience of the world's capricious and inconſtant humour. The renunciation in theſe caſes, however ſententious, is often far from ſincere; and it is even made not unfrequently, with a view to the attainment of that very diſtinction which it affects to diſclaim. In ſome other of theſe inſtances, the over-valuation and inordinate deſire of worldly credit, however diſavowed, are abundantly evident, from the merit which is aſſumed for relinquiſhing them; or from that ſour and ſurly humour, which betrays a gloomy and a corroded mind, galled and fretting under the irritating ſenſe of the want of that which it moſt wiſhes to poſſeſs.

But the Chriſtian's is a far different temper: not a temper of ſordid ſenſuality, or lazy apathy, or dogmatizing pride, or diſappointed ambition: more truly independent of worldly eſtimation than philoſophy with all her boaſts, it forms a perfect contraſt to Epicurean ſelfiſhneſs, and to Stoical pride, and to Cynical brutality. It is a temper compounded of firmneſs, and complacency, and peace, and love; and manifeſting itſelf in acts of kindneſs and of courteſy; a kindneſs, not pretended but genuine; a courteſy, not falſe and ſuperficial, but cordial and ſincere. In the hour of popularity it is not intoxicated, or inſolent; in the hour of unpopularity, it is not deſponding or moroſe; unſhaken in conſtancy, unwearied in benevolence, firm without roughneſs, and affiduous without ſervility.

Notwithſtanding the great importance of the topic which we have been inveſtigating, it will require much indulgence on the part of the reader, to excuſe the diſproportionate length into which the diſcuſſion has been almoſt inſen-

ſibly drawn out: yet this, it is hoped, may not be without its uſes, if the writer have in any degree ſucceeded in his endeavour, to point out the dangerous qualities and unchriſtian tendencies of a principle, of ſuch general predominance throughout the higher claſſes of ſociety, and to ſuggeſt to the ſerious inquirer ſome practical hints for its regulation and controul. Since the principle too, of which we have been treating, is one of the moſt ordinary modifications of pride; the diſcuſſion may alſo ſerve in ſome degree to ſupply a manifeſt deficiency, a deficiency to be aſcribed to the fear of treſpaſſing too far on the reader's patience, in having but ſlightly touched on the allowed prevalence of that maſter paſſion, and on the allowed neglect of its oppoſite, humility.

SECTION IV.

The generally prevailing Error, of ſubſtituting amiable Tempers and uſeful Lives in the place of Religion, ſtated and confuted; with Hints to real Chriſtians.

THERE is another practical error very generally prevalent, the effects of which are highly injurious to the cauſe of Religion; and which in particular is often brought forward when, upon Chriſtian principles, any advocates for Chriſtianity would preſs the practice of Chriſtian virtues. Before we proceed, therefore, to comment upon what remains to be diſcuſſed, of the miſconceptions and defects of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians, it may not be amiſs to diſpoſe of this objection to our whole ſcheme.

The

The error in queſtion is that of exaggerating the merit of certain amiable and uſeful qualities, and of conſidering them as of themſelves ſufficient to compenſate for the want of the ſupreme love and fear of God.

It ſeems to be an opinion pretty generally prevalent, that kindneſs and ſweetneſs of temper; ſympathizing, and benevolent, and generous affections; attention to what in the world's eſtimation are the domeſtic, relative, and ſocial duties; and above all a life of general activity and uſefulneſs, may well be allowed, in our imperfect ſtate, to make up for the defect of what in ſtrict propriety of ſpeech is termed Religion.

Many indeed will unreſervedly declare, and more will hint the opinion, that "the difference "between the qualities above-mentioned and "Religion, is rather a verbal or logical, than a "real and eſſential difference; for in truth "what are they but Religion in ſubſtance if not "in name? Is it not the great end of Religion, "and in particular the glory of Chriſtianity, to "extinguiſh the malignant paſſions; to curb "the violence, to controul the appetites, and "to ſmooth the aſperities of man; to make us "compaſſionate and kind, and forgiving one to "another; to make us good huſbands, good "fathers, good friends, and to render us active "and uſeful in the diſcharge of the relative, ſo-"cial, and civil duties? We do not deny that "in the general maſs of ſociety, and particu-"larly in the lower orders, ſuch conduct and "tempers cannot be diffuſed and maintained by "any other medium than that of Religion. "But if the end be effected, ſurely it is only "unneceſſary refinement to diſpute about the "means." It is even to forget your own princi-

ples;

" ples; and to refuſe its juſt place to ſolid prac-
" tical virtue, while you aſſign too high a value
" to ſpeculative opinions."

Thus a fatal diſtinction is admitted between Morality and Religion: a great and deſperate error, of which it is the more neceſſary to take notice; becauſe many who would condemn, as too ſtrong, the language in which this opinion is ſometimes openly avowed, are yet more or leſs tinctured with the notion itſelf; and under the habitual and almoſt unperceived influence of this beguiling ſuggeſtion, are vainly ſolacing their imaginations, and repreſſing their well-grounded fears concerning *their own* ſtate; and are alſo quieting their juſt ſolicitude concerning the ſpiritual condition of *others*, and ſoothing themſelves in the neglect of friendly endeavours for their improvement.

There can hardly be a ſtronger proof of the curſory and ſuperficial views, with which men are apt to ſatisfy themſelves in religious concerns, than the prevalence of the opinion here in queſtion; the falſehood and ſophiſtry of which muſt be acknowledged by any one who, admitting the authority of Scripture, will examine it with ever ſo little ſerioufneſs and impartiality of mind.

Appealing indeed to a leſs ſtrict ſtandard, it would not be difficult to ſhew that the moral worth of theſe ſweet and benevolent tempers, and of theſe uſeful lives, is apt to be greatly over-rated. The former involuntarily gain upon our affections and diſarm our ſeverer judgments, by their kindly, complying, and apparently diſintereſted nature; by their prompting men to flatter inſtead of mortifying our pride, to ſympathize either with our joys or our ſorrows, to abound

abound in obliging attentions and offices of courteſy; by their obvious tendency to produce and maintain harmony and comfort in ſocial and domeſtic life. It is not however unworthy of remark, that from the commendations which are ſo generally beſtowed on theſe qualities, and their rendering men univerſally acceptable and popular, there is many a falſe pretender to them, who gains a credit for them which he by no means deſerves; in whom they are no more than the proprieties of his aſſumed character, or even a maſk which is worn in public, only the better to conceal an oppoſite temper. Would you ſee this man of courteſy and ſweetneſs ſtripped of his falſe covering, follow him unobſerved into his family; and you ſhall behold, too plain to be miſtaken, ſelfiſhneſs and ſpleen haraſſing and vexing the wretched ſubjects of their unmanly tyranny; as if being releaſed at length from their confinement, they were making up to themſelves for the reſtraint which had been impoſed on them in the world.

But where the benevolent qualities are genuine, they often deſerve the name rather of amiable inſtincts, than of moral virtues. In many caſes, they imply no mental conflict, no previous diſcipline: they are apt to evaporate in barren ſenſibilities, and tranſitory ſympathies, and indolent wiſhes, and unproductive declarations: they poſſeſs not that ſtrength and energy of character, which, in contempt of difficulties and dangers, produce alacrity in ſervice, vigour and perſeverance in action. Deſtitute of proper firmneſs, they often encourage that vice and folly which it is their eſpecial duty to repreſs; and it is well if, from their ſoft complying humour, they are not often drawn in to participate in what

what is wrong, as well as to connive at it. Thus their poſſeſſors are frequently, in the eye of truth and reaſon, bad magiſtrates, bad parents, bad friends; defective in thoſe very qualities, which give to each of thoſe ſeveral relations its chief and appropriate value. And this, let it be alſo obſerved, is a defect which might well bring into queſtion that freedom from ſelfiſhneſs, which is ſo often claimed for them; inaſmuch as there is too great reaſon to fear, that it often ariſes in us chiefly from indiſpoſition to ſubmit to a painful effort, though real good-will commands the ſacrifice, or from the fear of leſſening the regard in which we are held, and the good opinion which is entertained of us.

It ſhould farther alſo be obſerved concerning theſe qualities, when they are not grounded and rooted in religion, that they are of a ſickly and ſhort-lived nature, and want that hardy and vigorous temperament, which is requiſite for enabling them to bear without injury, or even to ſurvive, the rude ſhocks and the variable and churliſh ſeaſons, to which in ſuch a world as this they muſt ever be expoſed. It is only a *Chriſtian* love of which it is the character, that "it ſuffereth long, and yet is kind;" "that it is "not eaſily provoked, that it beareth all things, "and endureth all things." In the ſpring of youth indeed, the blood flows freely through the veins; we are fluſhed with health and confidence; hope is young and ardent, our deſires are unſated, and whatever we ſee has the grace of novelty; we are the more diſpoſed to be good-natured becauſe we are pleaſed; pleaſed, becauſe univerſally well received. Wherever we caſt our eyes, we ſee ſome face of friendſhip, and love, and gratulation: All nature ſmiles around

around us. Now the amiable tempers of which we have been ſpeaking naturally ſpring up. The ſoil ſuits, the climate favours them. They appear to ſhoot forth vigorouſly and bloſſom in gay luxuriance. To the ſuperficial eye, all is fair and flouriſhing; we anticipate the fruits of Autumn, and promiſe ourſelves an ample produce. But by and by the ſun ſcorches, the froſt nips, the winds riſe, the rains deſcend; our golden dreams are blaſted, all our fond expectations are no more. Our youthful efforts let it be ſuppoſed have been ſucceſsful; and we riſe to wealth or eminence. A kind flexible temper and popular manners have produced in us, as they are too apt, a youth of eaſy ſocial diſſipation, and unproductive idleneſs; and we are overtaken too late by the conſciouſneſs of having waſted that time which cannot be recalled, and thoſe opportunities which we cannot now recover. We ſink into diſregard and obſcurity when, there being a call for qualities of more energy, indolent good nature muſt fall back. We are thruſt out of notice by accident or misfortunes. We are left behind by thoſe with whom we ſtarted on equal terms, and who, originally perhaps having leſs pretenſions and fewer advantages, have greatly outſtripped us in the race of honour: and their having got before us is often the more galling, becauſe it appears to us, and perhaps with reaſon, to have been chiefly owing to a generous eaſy good-natured humour on our part, which diſpoſed us to allow them at firſt to paſs by us without jealouſy, and led us to give place without a ſtruggle to their more lofty pretenſions. Thus we ſuffered them quietly to occupy a ſtation to which originally we had as fair a claim as they; but, this ſtation being once tamely

tamely ſurrendered, we have forfeited it for ever. Our aukward and vain endeavours meanwhile to recover it, while they ſhew that we want ſelf-knowledge and compoſure in our riper years, as much as in our younger we had been deſtitute of exertion, ſerve only to make our inferiority more manifeſt, and to bring our diſcontent into the fuller notice of an ill-natured world, which however not unjuſtly condemns and ridicules our miſplaced ambition.

It may be ſufficient to have hinted at a few of the viciſſitudes and changes of advancing life; let the reader's own mind fill up the catalogue. Now the boſom is no longer cheerful and placid; and if the countenance preſerve its exterior character, this is no longer the honeſt expreſſion of the heart. Proſperity and luxury, gradually extinguiſhing ſympathy, and puffing up with pride, harden and debaſe the ſoul. In other inſtances, ſhame ſecretly clouds, and remorſe begins to ſting, and ſuſpicion to corrode, and jealouſy and envy to embitter. Diſappointed hopes, unſucceſsful competitions, and fruſtrated purſuits, ſour and irritate the temper. A little perſonal experience of the ſelfiſhneſs of mankind, damps our generous warmth and kind affections; reproving the prompt ſenſibility and unſuſpecting ſimplicity of our earlier years. Above all, ingratitude ſickens the heart, and chills and thickens the very life's-blood of benevolence: till at length our youthful Nero, ſoft and ſuſceptible, becomes a hard and cruel tyrant; and our youthful Timon, the gay, the generous, the beneficent, is changed into a cold, ſour, ſilent miſanthrope.

And as in the caſe of amiable tempers, ſo in that alſo of what are called uſeful lives, it muſt be confeſſed that their intrinſic worth, arguing

ſtill

ſtill merely on principles of reaſon, is apt to be greatly over-rated. They are often the reſult of a diſpoſition naturally buſtling and active, which delights in motion, and finds its labour more than repaid, either by the very pleaſure which it takes in its employments, or by the credit which it derives from them. More than this; if it be granted that Religion tends in general to produce uſefulneſs, particularly in the lower orders, who compoſe a vaſt majority of every ſociety; and therefore that theſe irreligious men of uſeful lives are rather exceptions to the general rule; it muſt at leaſt be confeſſed that they are ſo far uſeleſs, or even poſitively miſchievous, as they either neglect to encourage or actually diſcourage that principle, which is the great operative ſpring of uſefulneſs in the bulk of mankind.

Thus it might well perhaps be queſtioned, eſtimating theſe men by their own ſtandard, whether the *particular* good in this caſe, is not more than counterbalanced by the *general* evil; ſtill more, if their conduct being brought to a ſtrict account, they ſhould be charged, as they juſtly ought, with the loſs of the good which, if they had manifeſtly and avowedly acted from a higher principle, might have been produced, not only directly in themſelves, but indirectly and remotely in others, from the extended efficacy of a religious example. They may be compared, not unaptly, to perſons whom ſome peculiarity of conſtitution enables to ſet at defiance thoſe eſtabliſhed rules of living, which muſt be obſerved by the world at large. Theſe healthy debauchees, however they may plead in their defence that they do themſelves no injury, would probably, but for their exceſſes, have both enjoyed

joyed their health better, and preſerved it longer, as well as have turned it to better account; and it may at leaſt be urged againſt them, that they diſparage the laws of temperance, and fatally betray others into the breach of them, by affording an inſtance of their being tranſgreſſed with impunity.

But were the merit of the qualities in queſtion greater than it is, and though it were not liable to the exceptions which have been alleged againſt it, yet could they be in no degree admitted, as a compenſation for the want of the ſupreme love and fear of God, and of a predominant deſire to promote his glory. The obſervance of one commandment, however clearly and forcibly enjoined, cannot make up for the neglect of another, which is enjoined with equal clearneſs and equal force. To allow this plea in the preſent inſtance, would be to permit men to abrogate the firſt table of the law on condition of their obeying the ſecond. But Religion ſuffers not any ſuch *compoſition* of duties. It is on the very ſelf ſame miſerable principle, that ſome have thought to atone for a life of injuſtice and rapine by the ſtrictneſs of their religious obſervances. If the former claſs of men can plead the diligent diſcharge of their duties to their fellow-creatures, the latter will urge that of their's to God. We eaſily ſee the falſehood of the plea in the latter caſe; and it is only ſelf-deceit and partiality which prevent its being equally viſible in the former. Yet ſo it is; ſuch is the unequal meaſure, if I may be allowed the expreſſion, which we deal out to God, and to each other. It would juſtly and univerſally be thought falſe confidence in the religious thief or the religious adulterer, (to admit for the ſake of argument ſuch a ſole-

ciſm

ciſm in terms) to ſolace himſelf with the firm perſuaſion of the Divine favour: but it will, to many, appear hard and preciſe, to deny this firm perſuaſion of Divine approbation to the avowedly irreligious man of ſocial and domeſtic uſefulneſs.

Will it here be urged, that the writer is not doing juſtice to his opponent's argument; which is not, that irreligious men of uſeful lives may be excuſed for neglecting their duties towards God, in conſideration of their exemplary diſcharge of their duties towards their fellow-creatures; but that in performing the latter they perform the former *virtually*, and *ſubſtantially*, if not in name?

Can then our opponent deny, that the Holy Scriptures are in nothing more full, frequent, ſtrong, and unequivocal, than in their injunctions on us ſupremely to love and fear God, and to worſhip and ſerve him continually with humble and grateful hearts; habitually regarding him as our Benefactor, and Sovereign, and Father, and abounding in ſentiments of gratitude and loyalty, and reſpectful affection? Can he deny that theſe poſitive precepts are rendered, if poſſible, ſtill more clear, and their authority ſtill more binding, by illuſtrations and indirect confirmations almoſt innumerable? And who then is that bold intruder into the counſels of infinite wiſdom, who, in palpable contempt of theſe preciſe commands, thus illuſtrated alſo and confirmed, will dare to maintain that, knowing the intention with which they were primarily given and the ends they were ultimately deſigned to produce, he may innocently neglect or violate their plain obligations; on the plea that he conforms himſelf, though in a different manner, to this primary intention, and produces, though by

by different means, theſe real and ultimate ends?

This mode of arguing is one, with which, to ſay nothing of its inſolent prophaneneſs, the heart of man, prone to deceive himſelf and partial in his own cauſe, is not fit to be truſted. Here again, more cautious and jealous in the caſe of our worldly, than of our religious intereſts, we readily diſcern the fallacy of this reaſoning and proteſt againſt it, when it is attempted to be introduced into the commerce of life. We ſee clearly that it would afford the means of refining away by turns every moral obligation. The adulterer might allow himſelf with a good conſcience, to violate the bed of his unſuſpecting friend, whenever he could aſſure himſelf that his crime would eſcape detection; for then, where would be the evil and miſery, the prevention of which was the real ultimate object of the prohibition of adultery? The thief, in like manner, and even the murderer, might find abundant room for the *innocent* exerciſe of their reſpective occupations, arguing from the primary intention and real objects of the commands, by which theft and murder were forbidden. There perhaps exiſts not a crime, to which this crooked morality would not furniſh ſome convenient opening.

But this miſerable ſophiſtry deſerves not that we ſhould ſpend ſo much time in the refutation of it. To diſcern its fallaciouſneſs, requires not acuteneſs of underſtanding, ſo much as a little common honeſty. "There is indeed no ſurer "mark of a falſe and hollow heart, than a diſ-"poſition thus to quibble away the clear injunc-"tions of duty and conſcience *(a)*:" It is the

(a) Vide SMITH's Theory of Moral Sentiments.

wretched

wretched reſource of a diſingenuous mind, endeavouring to eſcape from convictions before which it cannot ſtand, and to evade obligations which it dares not diſavow.

The arguments which have been adduced would ſurely be ſufficient to diſprove the extravagant pretenſions of the qualities under conſideration, though thoſe qualities were *perfect* in their *nature*. But they are not perfect. On the contrary, they are radically defective and corrupt; they are a body without a ſoul; they want the vital actuating principle, or rather they are animated and actuated by a falſe one. Chriſtianity, let me avail myſelf of the very words of a friend *(a)* in maintaining her argument, is "a Religion of Motives." *That* only is Chriſtian practice, which flows from Chriſtian principles; and none elſe will be admitted as ſuch by Him, who will be obeyed as well as worſhipped "in ſpirit and in truth."

This alſo is a poſition of which, in our intercourſe with our fellow-creatures, we clearly diſcern the juſtice, and univerſally admit the force. Though we have received a benefit at the hands of any one, we ſcarcely feel grateful, if we do not believe the intention towards us to have been friendly. Have we ſerved any one from motives of kindneſs, and is a return of ſervice made to us? We hardly feel ourſelves worthily requited, except that return be dictated by gratitude. We ſhould think ourſelves rather injured than obliged by it, if it were merely prompted by a proud unwillingneſs to continue in our debt *.

(a) The writer hopes that the work to which he is referring is ſo well known, that he needs ſcarcely name Mrs. H. More.

* See SMITH's Theory of Moral Sentiments.

What

What huſband, or what father, not abſolutely dead to every generous feeling, would be ſatisfied with a wife or a child; who, though he could not charge them with any actual breach of their reſpective obligations, ſhould yet confeſſedly perform them from a cold ſenſe of duty, in place of the quickening energies of conjugal, and filial affection? What an inſult would it be to ſuch an one, to tell him gravely that he had no reaſon to complain!

The unfairneſs, with which we ſuffer ourſelves to reaſon in matters of Religion, is no where more ſtriking than in the inſtance before us. It were perhaps not unnatural to ſuppoſe that, as we cannot ſee into each other's boſoms, and have no ſure way of judging any one's internal principles but by his external actions, it would have grown into an eſtabliſhed rule, that when the latter were unobjectionable, the former were not to be queſtioned; and on the other hand, that in reference to a Being who ſearches the heart, our motives, rather than our external actions, would be granted to be the juſt objects of inquiry. But we exactly reverſe theſe natural principles of reaſoning. In the caſe of our fellow-creatures, the motive is that which we principally inquire after and regard. But in the caſe of our Supreme Judge, from whom no ſecrets are hid, we ſuffer ourſelves to believe that internal principles may be diſpenſed with, if the external action be performed!

Let us not however be ſuppoſed ready to concede, in contradiction to what has been formerly contended, that where the true motive is wanting, the external actions themſelves will not generally betray the defect. Who is there that will not confeſs in the inſtance ſo lately put, of a wife

a wife and a child who ſhould diſcharge their reſpective obligations merely from a cold ſenſe of duty, that the inferiority of their actuating principle would not be confined to its *nature*, but would be diſcoverable alſo in its *effects?* Who is there that does not feel that theſe domeſtic ſervices, thus robbed of their vital ſpirit, would be ſo debaſed and degraded in our eſtimation, as to become not barely lifeleſs and unintereſting, but even diſtaſteful and loathſome? Who will deny that theſe would be performed in fuller meaſure, with more wakeful and unwearied attention, as well as with more *heart;* where with the ſame ſenſe of duty the enlivening principle of affection ſhould be alſo aſſociated?

The enemies of Religion are ſometimes apt to compare the irreligious man, of a temper naturally ſweet and amiable, with the religious man of natural roughneſs and ſeverity; the irreligious man of natural activity, with the religious man who is naturally indolent; and thence to draw their inferences. But this mode of reaſoning is ſurely unjuſt. If they would argue the queſtion fairly, they ſhould make their compariſons between perſons of ſimilar natural qualities, and not in one or two examples, but in a maſs of inſtances. They would then be compelled to confeſs the efficacy of Religion, in heightening the benevolence and increaſing the uſefulneſs of men: and to admit, that, granting the occaſional but rare exiſtence of genuine and perſevering benevolence of diſpoſition and uſefulneſs of life, where the religious principle is wanting; yet that experience gives us reaſon to believe, that true Religion, while it would have implanted theſe qualities in perſons in whom before they had no place, would in general have given,

given, to theſe very characters in whom they do exiſt, additional force in the ſame direction. It would have rendered the amiable more amiable, the uſeful more uſeful, with fewer inconſiſtencies, with leſs abatement.

Let *true Chriſtians* meanwhile be ever mindful, that *they* are loudly called upon to make this argument ſtill more clear, theſe poſitions ſtill leſs queſtionable. You are every where commanded to be tender and ſympathetic, diligent and uſeful; and it is the character of that "wiſdom "from above," in which you are to be proficients, that it "is gentle and eaſy to be intreated, "full of mercy and good fruits." Could the efficacy of Chriſtianity in ſoftening the heart be denied by thoſe, who ſaw in the inſtance of the great Apoſtle of the Gentiles, that it was able to transform a bigotted, furious, and cruel perſecutor, into an almoſt unequalled example of candour, and gentleneſs, and univerſal tenderneſs and love? Could its ſpirit of active beneficence be denied by thoſe, who ſaw its Divine Author ſo diligent and unwearied in his benevolent labours, as to juſtify the compendious deſcription which was given of him by a perſonal witneſs of his exertions, that he "went about "doing good?" Imitate theſe bleſſed examples: ſo ſhall you vindicate the honour of your profeſſion, and "put to ſilence the ignorance of fool-"iſh men:" ſo ſhall you obey thoſe Divine injunctions of adorning the doctrine of Chriſt, and of "letting your light ſhine before men, that "they may ſee your good works, and glorify "your Father which is in heaven." Beat the world at its own beſt weapons. Let your love be more affectionate, your mildneſs leſs open to irritation, your diligence more laborious, your activity

activity more wakeful and perſevering. Conſider ſweetneſs of temper and activity of mind, if they naturally belong to you, as talents of ſpecial worth and utility, for which you will have to give account. Carefully watch againſt whatever might impair them, cheriſh them with conſtant aſſiduity, keep them in continual exerciſe, and direct them to their nobleſt ends. The latter of theſe qualities renders it leſs difficult, and therefore more incumbent on you, to be ever abounding in the work of the Lord; and to be copious in the production of that ſpecies of good fruit, of which mankind in general will be moſt ready to allow the excellence, becauſe they beſt underſtand its nature. In *your* inſtance, the ſolid ſubſtance of Chriſtian practice is eaſily ſuſceptible of that high and beautiful poliſh, which may attract the attention, and extort the admiration of a careleſs and undiſcerning world, ſo ſlow to notice, and ſo backward to acknowledge, intrinſic worth, when concealed under a leſs ſightly exterior. Know then, and value as ye ought, the honourable office which is eſpecially devolved on you. Let it be your acceptable ſervice to recommend the diſcredited cauſe, and ſuſtain the fainting intereſts of Religion, to furniſh to her friends matter of ſound and obvious argument, and of honeſt triumph; and if your beſt endeavours cannot conciliate, to refute at leaſt, and confound her enemies.

If on the other hand, you are conſcious that you are naturally rough and auſtere, that diſappointments have ſoured, or proſperity has elated you, or that habits of command have rendered you quick in expreſſion, and impatient of contradiction; or if, from whatever other cauſe, you have contracted an unhappy peeviſhneſs of

temper, or aſperity of manners, or harſhneſs and ſeverity of language, (remember that theſe defects are by no means incompatible with an aptneſs to perform ſervices of ſubſtantial kindneſs); if nature has been confirmed by habit till at length your ſoul ſeems thoroughly tinctured with theſe evil diſpoſitions, yet do not deſpair. Remember that the Divine Agency is promiſed, "to take away the heart of ſtone, and give a "heart of fleſh," of which it is the natural property to be tender and ſuſceptible. Pray then earneſtly and perſeveringly, that the bleſſed aid of Divine Grace may operate effectually on your behalf. Beware of acquieſcing in the evil tempers in queſtion, under the idea that they are the ordinary imperfections of the beſt of men; that they ſhew themſelves only in little inſtances; that they are only occaſional, haſty, and tranſient effuſions, when you are taken off your guard; the paſſing ſhade of your mind, and not the ſettled colour. Beware of excuſing or allowing them in yourſelf, under the notion of warm zeal for the cauſe of Religion and virtue, which you perhaps own is now and then apt to carry you into ſomewhat over-great ſeverity of judgment, or ſharpneſs in reproof. Liſten not to theſe, or any other ſuch flattering excuſes, which your own heart will be but too ready to ſuggeſt to you. Scrutinize yourſelf rather with rigorous ſtrictneſs; and where there is ſo much room for ſelf-deceit, call in the aid of ſome faithful friend, and unboſoming yourſelf to him without concealment, aſk his impartial and unreſerved opinion of your behaviour and condition. Our unwillingneſs to do this, often betrays to others, (not ſeldom it firſt diſcovers to ourſelves) that we entertain a ſecret diſtruſt of our

our own character and conduct. Inſtead alſo of extenuating to yourſelf the criminality of the vicious tempers under conſideration, ſtrive to impreſs your mind deeply with a ſenſe of it. For this end, often conſider ſeriouſly, that theſe rough and churliſh tempers are a direct contraſt to the "meekneſs and gentleneſs of Chriſt;" and that Chriſtians are ſtrongly and repeatedly enjoined to copy after their great Model in theſe particulars, and to be themſelves patterns of "mercy and kindneſs, and humbleneſs of mind, "and meekneſs, and long ſuffering." They are to "put away all bitterneſs, and wrath, and "anger, and clamour, and evil ſpeaking," not only "being ready to every good work, but be-"ing *gentle* unto *all* men," "ſhewing *all* meek-"neſs unto *all* men," "forbearing, forgiving," tender hearted. Remember the Apoſtle's declaration, that "if any man bridleth not his "tongue, he only ſeemeth to be religious, and "deceiveth his own heart;" and that it is one of the characters of that love, without which all pretenſions to the name of Chriſtian are but vain, that "it doth not behave itſelf unſeemly." Conſider how much theſe acrimonious tempers muſt break in upon the peace, and deſtroy the comfort, of thoſe around you. Remember alſo that the honour of your Chriſtian profeſſion is at ſtake, and be ſolicitous not to diſcredit it: juſtly dreading leſt you ſhould diſguſt thoſe whom you ought to conciliate; and by conveying an unfavourable impreſſion of your principles and character, ſhould incur the guilt of putting an "offence in your brother's way;" thereby "hindering the Goſpel of Chriſt," the advancement of which ſhould be your daily and aſſiduous care.

Thus having come to the full knowledge of your diſeaſe, and to a juſt impreſſion of its malignity, ſtrive againſt it with inceſſant watchfulneſs. Guard with the moſt jealous circumſpection againſt its breaking forth into act. Force yourſelf to abound in little offices of courteſy and kindneſs; and you ſhall gradually experience in the performance of theſe a pleaſure hitherto unknown, and awaken in yourſelf the dormant principles of ſenſibility. But take not up with external amendment; guard againſt a falſe ſhew of ſweetneſs of diſpoſition; and remember that the Chriſtian is not to be ſatisfied with the world's ſuperficial courtlineſs of demeanor, but that his "Love is to be without "diſſimulation." Examine carefully, whether the unchriſtian tempers, which you would eradicate, are not maintained in vigour by ſelfiſhneſs and pride; and ſtrive to ſubdue them effectually, by extirpating the roots from which they derive their nutriment. Accuſtom yourſelf to endeavour to look attentively upon a careleſs and inconſiderate world, which, while it is in ſuch imminent peril, is ſo ignorant of its danger. Dwell upon this affecting ſcene, till it has excited your pity; and this pity, while it melts the mind to Chriſtian love, ſhall inſenſibly produce a temper of habitual ſympathy and ſoftneſs. By means like theſe, perſeveringly uſed in conſtant dependence on Divine aid, you may confidentially hope to make continual progreſs. Among men of the world, a youth of ſoftneſs and ſweetneſs will often, as we formerly remarked, harden into inſenſibility, and ſharpen into moroſeneſs. But it is the office of Chriſtianity to reverſe this order. It is pleaſing to witneſs this bleſſed renovation: to ſee, as life advances, aſperities

perities gradually ſmoothing down, and roughneſſes mellowing away: while the ſubject of this happy change experiences within, increaſing meaſures of the comfort which he diffuſes around him; and feeling the genial influences of that heavenly flame which can thus give life, and warmth, and action, to what had been hitherto rigid and inſenſible, looks up with gratitude to him who has ſhed abroad this principle of love in his heart;

Miraturque novas frondes et non ſua poma.

Let it not be thought that in the foregoing diſcuſſion, the amiable and uſeful qualities, where they are not prompted and governed by a principle of religion, have been ſpoken of in too diſparaging terms. Nor would I be underſtood as unwilling to concede to thoſe who are living in the exerciſe of them, their proper tribute of commendation: Ineſt ſua gratia. Of ſuch perſons it muſt be ſaid, in the language of ſcripture, "they have their reward." They have it in the inward complacency, which a ſweet temper ſeldom fails to inſpire; in the comforts of the domeſtic or ſocial circle; in the pleaſure which from the conſtitution of our nature accompanies purſuit and action. They are always beloved in private, and generally reſpected in public life. But when devoid of Religion, if the word of God be not a fable, "they cannot "enter into the kingdom of Heaven." True practical Chriſtianity (never let it be forgotten) conſiſts in devoting the heart and life to God; in being ſupremely and habitually governed by a deſire to know, and a diſpoſition to fulfil his will, and in endeavouring under the influence of *theſe motives* to "live to his glory." Where theſe eſſential

eſſential requiſites are wanting, however amiable the character may be, however creditable and reſpectable among men; yet as it poſſeſſes not the grand diſtinguiſhing eſſence, it muſt not be complimented with the name, of Chriſtianity. This however, when the external decorums of Religion are not violated, muſt commonly be a matter between God and a man's own conſcience; and we ought never to forget how ſtrongly we are enjoined to be candid and liberal in judging of the motives of others, while we are ſtrict in ſcrutinizing and ſevere in queſtioning our own. And this ſtrict ſcrutiny is no where more neceſſary, becauſe there is no where more room for the operation of ſelf-deceit. We are all extremely prone to lend ourſelves to the good opinion which, however falſely, is entertained of us by others; and though we at firſt confuſedly ſuſpect, or even indubitably know, that their eſteem is unfounded, and their praiſes undeſerved, and that they would have thought and ſpoken of us very differently, if they had diſcerned our ſecret motives, or had been accurately acquainted with all the circumſtances of our conduct; we gradually ſuffer ourſelves to adopt their judgment of us, and at length feel that we are in ſome ſort injured or denied our due, when theſe falſe commendations are contradicted or with-held. Without the moſt conſtant watchfulneſs, and the moſt cloſe and impartial ſelf-examination, irreligious people of amiable tempers, and ſtill more thoſe of uſeful lives, from the general popularity of their character, will be particularly liable to become the dupes of this propenſity. Nor is it they only who have here need to be on their guard: men of real religion will alſo do well to watch againſt this

this deluſion. There is however another danger to which theſe are ſtill more expoſed, and againſt which it is the rather neceſſary to warn them, becauſe of our having inſiſted ſo ſtrongly on their being bound to be diligent in the diſcharge of the active duties of life. In their endeavours to fulfil this obligation, let them ſpecially beware, leſt ſetting out on right principles, they inſenſibly loſe them in the courſe of their progreſs; leſt engaging originally in the buſineſs and buſtle of the world, from a ſincere and earneſt deſire to promote the glory of God, their minds ſhould become ſo heated and abſorbed in the purſuit of their object, as that the true motive of action ſhould either altogether ceaſe to be an habitual principle, or ſhould at leaſt loſe much of its life and vigour; leſt their thoughts and affections being engroſſed by temporal concerns, their ſenſe of the reality of "unſeen things" ſhould fade away, and they ſhould loſe their reliſh for the employments and offices of Religion.

The Chriſtian's path is beſet with dangers—On the one hand, he juſtly dreads an inactive and unprofitable life; on the other, he no leſs juſtly trembles for the loſs of that ſpiritual-mindedneſs, which is the very eſſence and power of his profeſſion. This is not quite the place for the full diſcuſſion of the difficult topic here in queſtion: and if it were, the writer of theſe ſheets is too conſcious of his own incompetencies, not to be deſirous of aſking rather than of giving advice reſpecting it. Yet, as it is a matter which has often engaged his moſt ſerious conſideration, and has been the frequent ſubject of his anxious inquiry into the writings and opinions of far better inſtructors, he will venture to deliver

deliver a few words on it, offering them with unaffected diffidence.

Does then the Chriſtian diſcover in himſelf, judging not from accidental and occaſional feelings, on which little ſtreſs is either way to be laid, but from the permanent and habitual temper of his mind, a ſettled, and ſtill more a growing, coldneſs and indiſpoſition towards the conſiderations and offices of Religion? And has he reaſon to apprehend that this coldneſs and indiſpoſition are owing to his being engaged too much or too earneſtly in worldly buſineſs, or to his being too keen in the purſuit of worldly objects? Let him carefully examine the ſtate of his own heart, and ſeriouſly and impartially ſurvey the circumſtances of his ſituation in life; humbly praying to the Father of light and mercy, that he may be enabled to ſee his way clearly in this difficult emergency. If he finds himſelf purſuing wealth, or dignity, or reputation, with earneſtneſs and ſolicitude; if theſe things engage many of his thoughts; if his mind naturally and inadvertently runs out into contemplations of them; if ſucceſs in theſe reſpects greatly gladdens, and diſappointments diſpirit and diſtreſs his mind; he has but too plain grounds for ſelf-condemnation. "No man "can ſerve two maſters." The world is evidently in poſſeſſion of his heart, and it is no wonder that he finds himſelf dull, or rather dead, to the impreſſion and enjoyment of ſpiritual things.

But though the marks of predominant eſtimation and regard for earthly things be much leſs clear and determinate; yet if the object which he is purſuing be one which, by its attainment, would bring him a conſiderable acceſſion of

of riches, ſtation, or honour, let him ſoberly and fairly queſtion and examine whether the purſuit be warrantable? here alſo, aſking the advice of ſome judicious friend; his backwardneſs to do which, in inſtances like theſe, ſhould juſtly lead him, as was before remarked, to diſtruſt the reaſonableneſs of the ſchemes which he is proſecuting. In ſuch a caſe as this, we have good cauſe to diſtruſt ourſelves. Though the inward hope, that we are chiefly prompted by a deſire to promote the glory of our Maker, and the happineſs of our fellow-creatures, by increaſing our means of uſefulneſs, may ſuggeſt itſelf to allay, yet let it not altogether remove, our ſuſpicions. It is not improbable, that beneath this plauſible maſk we conceal, more ſucceſsfully perhaps from ourſelves than from others, an inordinate attachment to the pomps and tranſitory diſtinctions of this life; and as this attachment gains the aſcendency, it will ever be found, that our perception and feeling of the ſupreme excellence of heavenly things will proportionably ſubſide.

But when the conſequences which would follow from the ſucceſs of our worldly purſuits do not render them ſo queſtionable, as in the caſe we have been juſt conſidering; yet, having ſuch good reaſon to believe that there is ſomewhere a flaw, could we but diſcover it, let us carefully ſcrutinize the whole of our conduct, taking that word in its largeſt ſenſe; in order to diſcover whether we may not be living either in the breach or in the omiſſion of ſome known duty, and whether it may not therefore have pleaſed God to withdraw from us the influence of his Holy Spirit; particularly inquiring, whether the duties of ſelf-examination, of ſecret and public

prayer, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and the other preſcribed means of Grace, have not been either wholly intermitted at their proper ſeaſons, or at leaſt been performed with precipitation or diſtraction? And if we find reaſon to believe, that the allotment of time, which it would be moſt for our ſpiritual improvement to aſſign to our religious offices, is often broken in upon and curtailed; let us be extremely backward to admit excuſes for ſuch interruptions and abridgments. It is more than probable, for many obvious reaſons, that even our worldly affairs themſelves will not on the long run, go on the better for encroaching upon thoſe hours, which ought to be dedicated to the more immediate ſervice of God, and to the cultivation of the inward principles of Religion. Our hearts at leaſt and our conduct will ſoon exhibit proofs of the ſad effects of this fatal negligence. They who in a crazy veſſel navigate a ſea wherein are ſhoals and currents innumerable, if they would keep their courſe or reach their port in ſafety, muſt carefully repair the ſmalleſt injuries, and often throw out their line and take their obſervations. In the voyage of life alſo the Chriſtian who would not make ſhipwreck of his faith, while he is habitually watchful and provident, muſt often make it his expreſs buſineſs to look into his ſtate, and aſcertain his progreſs.

But to reſume my ſubject; let us when engaged in this important ſcrutiny, impartially examine ourſelves whether the worldly objects which engroſs us, are all of them ſuch as properly belong to our profeſſion, or ſtation, or circumſtances in life; which therefore we could not neglect with a good conſcience? If they be, let us conſider whether they do not conſume a larger

larger ſhare of our time than they really require; and whether, by not trifling over our work, by deducting ſomewhat which might be ſpared from our hours of relaxation, or by ſome other little management, we might not fully ſatisfy their juſt claims, and yet have an increaſed overplus of leiſure, to be devoted to the offices of Religion.

But if we deliberately and honeſtly conclude that we ought not to give theſe worldly objects leſs of our *time*, let us endeavour at leaſt to give them leſs of our *hearts*: ſtriving that the ſettled frame of our *deſires* and affections may be more ſpiritual; and that in the motley intercourſes of life we may conſtantly retain a more lively ſenſe of the Divine preſence, and a ſtronger impreſſion of the reality of unſeen things; thus correſponding with the Scripture deſcription of true Chriſtians, "walking by faith and not by ſight, "and having our converſation in Heaven."

Above all, let us guard againſt the temptation, to which we ſhall certainly be expoſed, of lowering down our views to our ſtate, inſtead of endeavouring to riſe to the level of our views. Let us rather determine to know the worſt of our caſe, and ſtrive to be ſuitably affected with it; not forward to ſpeak peace to ourſelves, but patiently carrying about with us a deep conviction of our backwardneſs and inaptitude to religious duties, and a juſt ſenſe of our great weakneſs and numerous infirmities. This cannot be an unbecoming temper, in thoſe who are commanded to "work out their ſalvation with fear and "trembling." It prompts to conſtant and earneſt prayer. It produces that ſobriety, and lowlineſs and tenderneſs of mind, that meekneſs of demeanor and circumſpection in conduct, which

which are ſuch eminent characteriſtics of the true Chriſtian.

Nor is it a ſtate devoid of conſolation—" O " tarry thou the Lord's leiſure, be ſtrong and " he ſhall comfort thy heart."—" They that " wait on the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength." —" Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall " be comforted." Theſe Divine aſſurances ſooth and encourage the Chriſtian's diſturbed and dejected mind, and inſenſibly diffuſe a holy compoſure. The tint may be ſolemn, nay even melancholy, but it is mild and grateful. The tumult of his ſoul has ſubſided, and he is poſſeſſed by complacency, and hope, and love. If a ſenſe of undeſerved kindneſs fill his eyes with tears, they are tears of reconciliation and joy: while a generous ardour ſpringing up within him ſends him forth to his worldly labours " fer- " vent in ſpirit;" reſolving through the Divine aid to be henceforth more diligent and exemplary in living to the Glory of God, and longing meanwhile for that bleſſed time, when, " being " freed from the bondage of corruption," he ſhall be enabled to render to his Heavenly Benefactor more pure and acceptable ſervice.

After having diſcuſſed ſo much at large the whole queſtion concerning amiable tempers in general, it may be ſcarcely neceſſary to dwell upon that particular claſs of them which belongs to the head of generous emotions, or of exquiſite ſenſibility. To theſe almoſt all which has been ſaid above is ſtrictly applicable; to which it may be added, that the perſons in whom the latter qualities moſt abound, are often far from conducing to the peace and comfort of their neareſt connections. Theſe qualities indeed may be rendered highly uſeful inſtruments, when enliſted

enlisted into the service of Religion. But we ought to except against them the more strongly, when not under her controul; because there is still greater danger than in the former case, that persons in whom they abound, may be flattered into a false opinion of themselves by the excessive commendations often paid to them by others, and by the beguiling complacencies of their own minds, which are apt to be puffed up with a proud though secret consciousness of their own superior acuteness and sensibility. But it is the less requisite to enlarge on this topic, because it has been well discussed by many, who have unfolded the real nature of those fascinating qualities; who have well remarked, that though shewy and apt to catch the eye, they are of a flimsy and perishable fabric, not of that less gaudy but more substantial and durable texture, which, imparting permanent warmth and comfort, will long preserve its more sober honours, and stand the wear and tear of life, and the vicissitudes of seasons. It has been shewn, that these qualities often fail us when most we want their aid; that their possessors can solace themselves with their imaginary exertions in behalf of ideal misery, and yet shrink from the labours of active benevolence, or retire with disgust from the homely forms of real poverty and wretchedness. In fine, the superiority of true Christian charity and of plain practical beneficence has been ably vindicated; and the school of Rousseau has been forced to yield to the school of Christ, when the question has been concerning the best means of promoting the comfort of family life, or the temporal well-being of society *.

SECT.

* While all are worthy of blame, who, to qualities like these, have assigned a more exalted place than to religious and moral

SECTION V.

Some other grand defects in the practical ſyſtem of the Bulk of nominal Chriſtians.

IN the imperfect ſketch which has been drawn of the Religion of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, their fundamental error reſpecting the eſſential nature of Chriſtianity has been diſcuſſed, and traced into ſome of its many miſchievous conſequences. Several of their particular miſconceptions and allowed defects have alſo been pointed out and illuſtrated. It may not be improper to cloſe the ſurvey by noticing ſome

moral principle; there is one writer who, eminently culpable in this reſpect, deſerves, on another account, ſtill ſeverer reprehenſion. Really poſſeſſed of powers to explore and touch the fineſt ſtrings of the human heart, and bound by his ſacred profeſſion to devote thoſe powers to the ſervice of religion and virtue, he every where diſcovers a ſtudious ſolicitude to excite indecent ideas. We turn away our eyes with diſguſt from open immodeſty: but even this is leſs miſchievous than that more meaſured ſtyle, which excites impure images, without ſhocking us by the groſſneſſes of the language. Never was delicate ſenſibility proved to be more diſtinct from plain practical benevolence, than in the writings of the author to whom I allude. Inſtead of employing his talents for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, they were applied to the pernicious purpoſes of corrupting the national taſte, and of lowering the ſtandard of manners and morals. The tendency of his writings is to vitiate that purity of mind, intended by Providence as the companion and preſervative of youthful virtue; and to produce, if the expreſſion may be permitted, *a morbid ſenſibility in the perception of indecency*. An imagination exerciſed in this diſcipline is never *clean*, but ſeeks for and diſcovers ſomething indelicate in the moſt common phraſes and actions of ordinary life. If the general ſtyle of writing and converſation were to be formed on that model, to which Sterne uſed his utmoſt endeavours to conciliate the minds of men, there is no eſtimating the effects which would ſoon be produced on the manners and morals of the age.

others,

others, for the exiſtence of which we may now appeal to almoſt every part of the preceding delineation.

In the firſt place, then, there appears throughout, both in the principles and allowed conduct of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, a moſt inadequate idea of the *guilt and evil of ſin*. We every where find reaſon to remark, that, as was formerly obſerved, Religion is ſuffered to dwindle away into a mere matter of *police*. Hence the guilt of actions is eſtimated, not by the proportion in which, according to Scripture, they are offenſive to God, but by that in which they are injurious to ſociety. Murder, theft, fraud in all its ſhapes, and ſome ſpecies of lying, are manifeſtly, and in an eminent degree, injurious to ſocial happineſs. How different accordingly, in the moral ſcale, is the place they hold, from that which is aſſigned to idolatry, to general irreligion, to ſwearing, drinking, fornication, laſciviouſneſs, ſenſuality, exceſſive diſſipation; and in particular circumſtances, to pride, wrath, malice, and revenge!

Indeed, ſeveral of the above-mentioned vices are held to be groſsly criminal in the lower ranks, becauſe manifeſtly ruinous to their temporal intereſts: but in the higher, they are repreſented as "loſing half their evil by loſing all "their groſſneſs," as flowing naturally from great proſperity, from the exceſs of gaiety and good humour; and they are accordingly "re-"garded with but a ſmall degree of diſappro-"bation, and cenſured very ſlightly or not at "all *(a)*."—"Non meus hic ſermo eſt." Theſe are the remarks of authors, who have ſurveyed

(a) Vide SMITH on the Wealth of Nations, Vol. iii.

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the ſtage of human life with more than ordinary obſervation; one of whom in particular cannot be ſuſpected of having been miſled by religious prejudices, to form a judgment of the ſuperior orders too unfavourable and ſevere.

Will theſe poſitions however be denied? Will it be maintained that there is not the difference already ſtated, in the moral eſtimation of theſe different claſſes of vices? Will it be ſaid, that the one claſs is indeed more generally reſtrained, and more ſeverely puniſhed by human laws, becauſe more properly cognizable by human judicatures, and more directly at war with the well-being of ſociety; but that when brought before the tribunal of internal opinion they are condemned with equal rigour?

Facts may be denied, and charges laughed out of countenance: but where the general ſentiment and feeling of mankind are in queſtion, our common language is often the cleareſt and moſt impartial witneſs; and the concluſions thus furniſhed, are not to be parried by wit, or eluded by ſophiſtry. In the preſent caſe, our ordinary modes of ſpeech furniſh ſufficient matter for the determination of the argument; and abundantly prove our diſpoſition to conſider as matters of ſmall account, ſuch ſins as are not held to be injurious to the community. We invent for them diminutive and qualifying terms, which, if not, as in the common uſes of language *, to be admitted as ſigns of approbation and good will, muſt at leaſt be confeſſed to be proofs of our tendency to regard them with palliation and indulgence. Free-thinking, gallan-

* Vide the Grammarians and Dialecticians on the Diminutives of the Italian and other languages.

try,

try, jollity *(a)*, and a thouſand ſimilar phraſes might be adduced as inſtances. But it is worthy of remark, that no ſuch ſoft and qualifying terms are in uſe, for expreſſing the ſmaller degrees of theft, or fraud, or forgery, or any other of thoſe offences, which are committed by men againſt their fellow-creatures, and in the ſuppreſſion of which we are intereſted by our regard to our temporal concerns.

The charge which we are urging is indeed undeniable. In the caſe of any queſtion of honour, or of moral honeſty, we are ſagacious in diſcerning and inexorable in judging the offence. No allowance is made for the ſuddenneſs of ſurpriſe, or the ſtrength of temptations. One ſingle failure is preſumed to imply the abſence of the moral or honourable principle. The memory is retentive on theſe occaſions, and the man's character is blaſted for life. Here, even the mere ſuſpicion of having once offended can ſcarcely be got over: "There is an aukward "ſtory about that man, which muſt be explained "before he and I can become acquainted." But in the caſe of ſins againſt God, there is no ſuch watchful jealouſy, none of this rigorous logic. A man may go on in the frequent commiſſion of known ſins, yet no ſuch inference is drawn reſpecting the abſence of the religious principle. On the contrary, we ſay of him, that "though "his *conduct* be a little incorrect, his *principles* "are untouched;"—that he has *a good heart*: and ſuch a man may go quietly through life, with the titles of a *mighty worthy creature*, and a *very good Chriſtian*.

(a) Many more might be added, ſuch as a good fellow, a good companion, a libertine, a little free, a little looſe in talk, wild, gay, jovial, being no man's enemy but his own, &c. &c. &c. &c; above all, *having a good heart*.

But

But in the Word of God actions are eſtimated by a far leſs accommodating ſtandard. There we read of no little ſins. Much of our Saviour's ſermon on the mount, which many of the claſs we are condemning affect highly to admire, is expreſsly pointed againſt ſo dangerous a miſconception. *There*, no ſuch diſtinction is made between the rich and the poor. No notices are to be traced of one ſcale of morals for the higher, and of another for the lower claſſes of ſociety. Nay, the former are expreſsly guarded againſt any ſuch vain imagination; and are diſtinctly warned, that their condition in life is the more dangerous, becauſe of the more abundant temptations to which it expoſes them. Idolatry, fornication, laſciviouſneſs, drunkenneſs, revellings, inordinate affection, are, by the apoſtle likewiſe claſſed with theft and murder, and with what we hold in even ſtill greater abomination; and concerning them all it is pronounced alike, that "they which do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the "kingdom of God *."

In truth, the inſtance which we have lately ſpecified, of the looſe ſyſtem of theſe nominal Chriſtians, betrays a fatal abſence of the principle which is the very foundation of all Religion. Their ſlight notions of the guilt and evil of ſin diſcover an utter want of all ſuitable reverence for the Divine Majeſty. This principle is juſtly termed in Scripture, "the beginning of "wiſdom," and there is perhaps no one quality which it is ſo much the ſtudious endeavour of the ſacred writers to impreſs upon the human heart †.

* Gal. v. 19—21. Col. iii. 5—9.
† Job, xxviii. 28. Pſalm, cxi. 10. Prov. i. 7.—ix. 10.

Sin.

Sin is conſidered in Scripture as rebellion againſt the ſovereignty of God, and every different act of it equally violates his law, and, if perſevered in, diſclaims his ſupremacy. To the inconſiderate and the gay this doctrine may ſeem harſh, while, vainly fluttering in the ſunſhine of worldly proſperity, they lull themſelves into a fond ſecurity. "But the day of the Lord will "come as a thief in the night; in which the "Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and "the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the "earth alſo and the works that are therein ſhall "be burnt up"—"Seeing then, that all theſe "things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of per-"ſons ought we to be in all holy converſation "and Godlineſs?"* We are but an atom in the univerſe.—Worlds upon worlds ſurround us, all probably full of intelligent creatures, to whom, now or hereafter, we may be a ſpectacle, and afford an example of the Divine procedure. Who then ſhall take upon him to pronounce what might be the iſſue, if ſin were ſuffered to paſs unpuniſhed in one corner of this univerſal empire? Who ſhall ſay what confuſion might be the conſequence, what diſorder it might ſpread through the creation of God? Be this however as it may, the language of Scripture is clear and deciſive;—"The wicked ſhall be turned into "hell, and all the people that forget God."

It ſhould be carefully obſerved too, that theſe awful denunciations of the future puniſhment of ſin derive additional weight from this conſideration, that they are repreſented, not merely as a judicial ſentence which, without violence to the ſettled order of things, might be remitted

* 2 Peter, iii. 10, 11.

through

through the mere mercy of our Almighty Governor, but as ariſing out of the eſtabliſhed courſe of nature; as happening in the way of natural conſequence, juſt as a cauſe is neceſſarily connected with its effect; as reſulting from certain connections and relations which rendered them ſuitable and becoming. It is ſtated, that the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan are both ſet up in the world, and that to the one or the other of theſe we muſt belong. "The "righteous have *paſſed* from death unto life"—"they are delivered from the power of darkneſs, and are tranſlated into the kingdom of "God's dear Son *." They are become "the "children," and "the ſubjects of God." While on earth, they love his day, his ſervice, his people; they "ſpeak good of his name;" they abound in his works. Even here they are in ſome degree poſſeſſed of his image, by and by it ſhall be perfected; they ſhall awake up after his "likeneſs," and being "heirs of eternal life," they ſhall receive "an inheritance incorruptible "and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

Of ſinners, on the other hand, it is declared, that "they are of their father the devil;" while on earth, they are ſtyled "his children," "his "ſervants;" they are ſaid "to do his works," "to hold of his ſide," to be, "ſubjects of his "kingdom:" at length "they ſhall partake his "portion," when the merciful Saviour ſhall be changed into an avenging Judge, and ſhall pronounce that dreadful ſentence, "depart from "me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire prepared "for the devil and his angels."

* Col. i. 13.

Is

Is it poſſible that theſe declarations ſhould not ſtrike terror, or at leaſt excite ſerious and fearful apprehenſion in the lighteſt and moſt inconſiderate mind? But the imaginations of men are fatally prone to ſuggeſt to them fallacious hopes in the very face of theſe poſitive declarations. "We cannot perſuade ourſelves that God will "in fact prove ſo ſevere." It was the very deluſion to which our firſt parents liſtened; "Ye "ſhall not ſurely die."

Let me aſk theſe raſh men, who are thus diſpoſed to trifle with their immortal intereſts, had they lived in the antediluvian world, would they have conceived it poſſible that God would then execute his predicted threatening? Yet the event took place at the appointed time; the flood came and ſwept them all away: and this awful inſtance of the anger of God againſt ſin is related in the inſpired writings for our inſtruction. Still more to rouſe us to attention, the record is impreſſed in indelible characters on the ſolid ſubſtance of the very globe we inhabit; which thus, in every country upon earth, furniſhes practical atteſtations to the truth of the ſacred writings, and to the actual accompliſhment of their awful predictions. For myſelf I muſt declare, that I never can read without awe the paſſage, in which our Saviour is ſpeaking of the ſtate of the world at the time of this memorable event. The wickedneſs of men is repreſented to have been great and prevalent; yet not as we are ready to conceive, ſuch as to interrupt the courſe, and ſhake the very frame of ſociety. The general face of things was, perhaps, not very different from that which is exhibited in many of the European nations. It was a ſelfiſh, a luxurious, an irreligious, and an inconſiderate world.

world. They were called, but they would not hearken; they were warned, but they would not believe—"They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage:" such is the account of one of the Evangelists; in that of another it is stated nearly in the same words; "They were eating and drinking, marrying and "giving in marriage, and knew not until the "flood came and swept them all away."

Again, we see throughout, in the system which we have been describing a most inadequate conception of the difficulty of becoming true Christians; and an utter forgetfulness of its being the great business of life to secure our admission into Heaven, and to prepare our hearts for its service and enjoyments. The general notion appears to be, that, if born in a country of which Christianity is the established religion, we are born Christians. We do not therefore look out for positive evidence of our really being of that number; but putting the *onus probandi*, (if it may be so expressed) on the wrong side, we conceive ourselves such *of course*, except our title be disproved by positive evidence to the contrary. And we are so slow in giving ear to what conscience urges to us on this side; so dexterous in justifying what is clearly wrong, in palliating what we cannot justify, in magnifying the merit of what is fairly commendable, in flattering ourselves that our habits of vice are only occasional acts, and in multiplying our single acts into habits of virtue, that we must be bad indeed, to be compelled to give a verdict against ourselves. Besides, having no suspicion of our state, we do not set ourselves in earnest to the work of self-examination; but only receive in a confused and hasty way some occasional notices

notices of our danger, when ſickneſs, or the loſs of a friend, or the recent commiſſion of ſome act of vice of greater ſize than ordinary, has awakened in our conſciences a more than uſual degree of ſenſibility.

Thus, by the generality, it is altogether forgotten, that the Chriſtian has a great work to execute; that of forming himſelf after the pattern of his Lord and Maſter, through the operation of the Holy Spirit of God, which is promiſed to our fervent prayers and diligent endeavours. Unconſcious of the obſtacles which impede, and of the enemies which reſiſt their advancement; they are naturally forgetful alſo of the ample proviſion which is in ſtore, for enabling them to ſurmount the one, and to conquer the other. The ſcriptural repreſentations of the ſtate of the Chriſtian on earth, by the images of "a race," and "a warfare;" of its being neceſſary to rid himſelf of every encumbrance which might retard him in the one, and to furniſh himſelf with the whole armour of God for being victorious in the other, are, ſo far as theſe nominal Chriſtians are concerned, figures of no propriety or meaning. As little (as was formerly ſhewn) have they, in correſpondence with the Scripture deſcriptions of the feelings and language of real Chriſtians, any idea of acquiring a reliſh while on earth, for the worſhip and ſervice of Heaven. If the truth muſt be told, their notion is rather a confuſed idea of future gratification in Heaven, in return for having put a force upon their inclinations, and endured ſo much religion while on earth.

But all this is only *nominal* Chriſtianity, which exhibits a more inadequate image of her real excellencies, than the cold copyings, by ſome inſipid

inſipid pencil, convey of the force and grace of Nature, or of Raphael. In the language of Scripture, Chriſtianity is not a geographical, but a moral term. It is not the being a native of a Chriſtian country: it is *a condition*, *a ſtate*; the poſſeſſion of a *peculiar nature*, with the *qualities* and *properties* which belong to it.

Farther than this, it is a ſtate into which we are not *born*, but into which we muſt be *tranſlated*; a nature which we do not *inherit*, but into which we are to be *created anew*. To the undeſerved grace of God, which is promiſed on our uſe of the appointed means, we muſt be indebted for the attainment of this nature; and, to acquire and make ſure of it, is that great "work of our ſalvation," which we are commanded to "work out with fear and trembling." We are every where reminded, that this is a matter of labour and difficulty, requiring continual watchfulneſs, and unceaſing effort, and unwearied patience. Even to the very laſt, towards the cloſe of a long life conſumed in active ſervice, or in cheerful ſuffering, we find St. Paul himſelf declaring, that he conceived bodily ſelf-denial and mental diſcipline to be indiſpenſably neceſſary to his very ſafety. Chriſtians, who are really worthy of the name, are repreſented as being "made meet for the inheritance "of the Saints in light;" as "waiting for the "coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt;" as "looking for and haſtening unto the coming of the "day of God." It is ſtated as being enough to make them happy, that "Chriſt ſhould receive "them to himſelf;" and the ſongs of the bleſſed ſpirits in Heaven are deſcribed to be the ſame, as thoſe in which the ſervants of God on earth pour forth their gratitude and adoration.

Conſcious

Conſcious therefore of the indiſpenſable neceſſity, and of the arduous nature of the ſervice in which he is engaged, the true Chriſtian ſets himſelf to the work with vigour, and proſecutes it with diligence. His motto is that of the painter; "*nullus dies ſine linea.*" Fled as it were from a country in which the plague is raging, he thinks it not enough juſt to paſs the boundary line, but would put out of doubt his eſcape beyond the limbs of infection. Prepared to meet with difficulties, he is not diſcouraged when they occur; warned of his numerous adverſaries, he is not alarmed on their approach, or unprovided for encountering them. He knows that the beginnings of every new courſe may be expected to be rough and painful; but he is aſſured that the paths on which he is entering will ere long ſeem ſmoother, and become indeed "paths of pleaſantneſs and peace."

Now of the ſtate of ſuch an one the expreſſions of Pilgrim and Stranger are a lively deſcription; and all the other figures and images, by which Chriſtians are repreſented in Scripture, have in his caſe a determinate meaning and a juſt application. There is indeed none, by which the Chriſtian's ſtate on earth is in the word of God more frequently imaged, or more happily illuſtrated, than by that of a journey: and it may not be amiſs to pauſe for a while in order to ſurvey it under that reſemblance. The Chriſtian is travelling on buſineſs through a ſtrange country, in which he is commanded to execute his work with diligence, and purſue his courſe homeward with alacrity. The fruits which he ſees by the way-ſide he gathers with caution; he drinks of the ſtreams with moderation; he is thankful when the ſun ſhines, and his way is

pleaſant; but if it be rough and rainy, he cares not much, he is but a traveller. He is prepared for viciſſitudes; he knows that he muſt expect to meet with them in the ſtormy and uncertain climate of this world. But he is travelling to "a better country," a country of unclouded light and undiſturbed ſerenity. He finds alſo by experience, that when he has had the leaſt of external comforts, he has always been leaſt diſpoſed to loiter; and if for the time it be a little diſagreeable, he can ſolace himſelf with the idea of his being thereby forwarded in his courſe. In a leſs unfavourable ſeaſon, he looks round him with an eye of obſervation; he admires what is beautiful; he examines what is curious; he receives with complacency the refreſhments which are ſet before him, and enjoys them with thankfulneſs. Nor does he churliſhly refuſe to aſſociate with the inhabitants of the country through which he is paſſing; nor, ſo far as he may, to ſpeak their language, and adopt their faſhions. But he neither ſuffers pleaſure, nor curioſity, nor ſociety, to take up too much of his time, and is ſtill intent on tranſacting the buſineſs which he has to execute, and on proſecuting the journey which he is ordered to purſue. He knows alſo that, to the very end of life, his journey will be through a country in which he has many enemies; that his way is beſet with ſnares; that temptations throng around him, to ſeduce him from his courſe or check his advancement in it; that the very air diſpoſes to drowſineſs, and that therefore to the very laſt it will be requiſite for him to be circumſpect and collected. Often therefore he examines whereabouts he is, how he has got forward, and whether or not he is travelling in the right direction. Sometimes he

he ſeems to himſelf to make conſiderable progreſs, ſometimes he advances but ſlowly, too often he finds reaſon to fear that he has fallen backward in his courſe. Now he is cheered with hope, and gladdened by ſucceſs; now he is diſquieted with doubts, and damped by diſappointments. Thus while to nominal Chriſtians, Religion is a dull uniform thing, and they have no conception of the deſires and diſappointments, the hopes and fears, the joys and ſorrows, which it is calculated to bring into exerciſe; in the true Chriſtian all is life and motion, and his great work calls forth alternately the various paſſions of the ſoul. Let it not therefore be imagined that his is a ſtate of unenlivened toil and hardſhip. His very labours are "the la-"bours of love;" if "he has need of patience," it is "the patience of hope;" and he is cheered in his work by the conſtant aſſurance of preſent ſupport, and of final victory. Let it not be forgotten, that this is the very idea given us of happineſs by one of the ableſt examiners of the human mind; "a conſtant employment for a "deſired end, with the conſciouſneſs of conti-"nual progreſs." So true is the Scripture declaration, that "Godlineſs has the promiſe of "the life that now is, as well as of that which "is to come."

Our review of the character of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians has exhibited abundant proofs of their allowed defectiveneſs in that great conſtituent of the true Chriſtian character, *the love of God.* Many inſtances, in proof of this aſſertion, have been incidentally pointed out, and the charge is in itſelf ſo obvious, that it were ſuperfluous to ſpend much time in endeavouring to eſtabliſh it. Put the queſtion fairly to the

teſt. Concerning the proper marks and evidences of affection, there can be little diſpute. Let the moſt candid inveſtigator examine the character, and conduct, and language of the perſons of whom we have been ſpeaking; and he will be compelled to acknowledge, that ſo far as love towards the Supreme Being is in queſtion, theſe marks and evidences are no where to be met with. It is in itſelf a deciſive evidence of a contrary feeling in thoſe nominal Chriſtians, that they find no pleaſure in the ſervice and worſhip of God. Their devotional acts reſemble leſs the free-will offerings of a grateful heart, than that conſtrained and reluctant homage, which is exacted by ſome hard maſter from his oppreſſed dependents, and paid with cold ſullenneſs, and ſlaviſh apprehenſion. It was the very charge brought by God againſt his ungrateful people of old, that, while they called him Sovereign and Father, they withheld from him the regards which ſeverally belong to thoſe reſpected and endearing appellations. Thus we likewiſe think it enough to offer to the moſt excellent and amiable of Beings, to our ſupreme and unwearied Benefactor, a dull, artificial, heartleſs gratitude, of which we ſhould be aſhamed in the caſe of a fellow-creature, who had ever ſo ſmall a claim on our regard and thankfulneſs!

It may be of infinite uſe to eſtabliſh in our minds a ſtrong and habitual ſenſe of that firſt and great commandment—"Thou ſhalt love "the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and "with all thy mind, and with all thy ſoul, and "with all thy ſtrength." This paſſion, operative and vigorous in its very nature, like a maſter ſpring, would put and maintain in action all the

the complicated movements of the human ſoul. Soon alſo would it terminate many practical queſtions concerning the allowableneſs of certain compliances; queſtions which, with other ſimilar difficulties, are often only the cold offſpring of a ſpirit of reluctant ſubmiſſion, and cannot ſtand the encounter of this trying principle. If, for example, it were diſputed, whether or not the law of God were *ſo* ſtrict as had been ſtated, in condemning the ſlighteſt infraction of its precepts; yet, when, from the preciſe demands of juſtice, the appeal ſhould be made to the more generous principle of love, there would be at once an end of the diſcuſſion. Fear will deter from acknowledged crimes, and ſelf-intereſt will bribe to laborious ſervices: but it is the peculiar glory, and the very characteriſtic, of this more generous paſſion, to ſhew itſelf in ten thouſand little and undefinable acts of ſedulous attention, which love alone can pay, and of which, when paid, love alone can eſtimate the value. Love outruns the deductions of reaſoning; it ſcorns the refuge of caſuiſtry; it requires not the ſlow proceſs of laborious and undeniable proof that an action would be injurious and offenſive, or another beneficial or gratifying, to the object of affection. The leaſt hint, the ſlighteſt ſurmiſe, is ſufficient to make it ſtart from the former, and fly with eagerneſs to the latter.

I am well aware that I am now about to tread on very tender ground; but it would be an improper deference to the opinions and manners of the age altogether to avoid it. There has been much argument concerning the lawfulneſs of theatrical amuſements *(a)*. Let it be ſufficient

(a) It is almoſt unneceſſary to remark, that the word is to be underſtood in a large ſenſe, as including the Opera, &c.

to

to remark, that the controverſy would be ſhort indeed, if the queſtion were to be tried by this criterion of love to the Supreme Being. If there were any thing of that ſenſibility for the honour of God, and of that zeal in his ſervice, which we ſhew in behalf of our earthly friends, or of our political connections, ſhould we ſeek our pleaſure in that place which the debauchee, inflamed with wine, or bent on the gratification of other licentious appetites, finds moſt congenial to his ſtate and temper of mind? In that place, from the neighbourhood of which, (how juſtly termed a ſchool of morals might hence alone be inferred) decorum, and modeſty, and regularity retire, while riot and lewdneſs are invited to the ſpot, and invariably ſelect it for their choſen reſidence! where the ſacred name of God is often prophaned! where ſentiments are often heard with delight, and motions and geſtures often applauded, which would not be tolerated in private company, but which may far exceed the utmoſt licence allowed in the ſocial circle, without at all tranſgreſſing the large bounds of theatrical decorum! where, when moral principles are inculcated, they are not ſuch as a Chriſtian ought to cheriſh in his boſom, but ſuch as it muſt be his daily endeavour to extirpate; not thoſe which Scripture warrants, but thoſe which it condemns as falſe and ſpurious, being founded in pride and ambition, and the over-valuation of human favour! where ſurely, if a Chriſtian ſhould truſt himſelf at all, it would be requiſite for him to prepare himſelf with a double portion of watchfulneſs and ſerioufneſs of mind, inſtead of ſelecting it as the place in which he may throw off his guard, and unbend without danger! The juſtneſs of this

laſt

laſt remark, and the general tendency of theatrical amuſements, is atteſted by the ſame well inſtructed maſter in the ſcience of human life, to whom we had before occaſion to refer. By him they are recommended as the moſt efficacious expedient for relaxing, among any people, that "*preciſeneſs and auſterity* of morals," to uſe his own phraſe, which, under the name of holineſs, it is the buſineſs of Scripture to inculcate and enforce. Nor is this poſition merely theoretical. The experiment was tried, and tried ſucceſsfully, in a city upon the continent *(a)*, in which it was wiſhed to corrupt the ſimple morality of purer times.

Let us try the queſtion by a parallel inſtance. What judgment ſhould we form of the warmth of that man's attachment to his Sovereign, who, at ſeaſons of recreation, ſhould ſeek his pleaſures in ſcenes as ill accordant with the principle of loyalty, as thoſe of which we have been ſpeaking are with the genius of religion? If for this purpoſe he were to ſelect the place, and frequent the amuſements, to which

(a) Geneva—It is worthy of remark, that the play houſes have multiplied extremely in Paris ſince the revolution; and that laſt winter there were twenty open every night, and all crowded. It ſhould not be left unobſerved, and it is ſeriouſly ſubmitted to the conſideration of thoſe who regard the ſtage as a ſchool of morals, that the pieces which were beſt compoſed, beſt acted, and moſt warmly and generally applauded, were ſuch as abounded in touches of delicate ſenſibility. The people of Paris have never been imagined to be more ſuſceptible, than the generality of mankind, of theſe emotions, and this is not the particular period when the Pariſians have been commonly conceived moſt under their influence. Vide Journal d'un Voyageur Neutre. The author of the work expreſſes himſelf as aſtoniſhed by the phænomenon, and as unable to account for it.

Democrats

Democrats and Jacobins *(a)* ſhould love to reſort for entertainment, and in which they ſhould find themſelves ſo much at home, as invariably to ſelect the ſpot for their abiding habitation; where dialogue, and ſong, and the intelligible language of geſticulation, ſhould be uſed to convey ideas and ſentiments, not perhaps palpably treaſonable, or directly falling within the ſtrict preciſion of any legal limits, but yet palpably contrary to the ſpirit of monarchical government; which, further, the higheſt authorities had recommended as ſovereign ſpecifics for cooling the warmth, and enlarging the narrowneſs of an exceſſive loyalty! What opinion ſhould we form of the delicacy of that friendſhip, or of the fidelity of that love, which, in relation to their reſpective objects, ſhould exhibit the ſame contradictions?

In truth, the *hard meaſure*, if the phraſe may be pardoned, which, as has been before remarked, we give to God; and the very different way in which we allow ourſelves to act, and ſpeak, and feel, where he is concerned, from that which we require, or even practiſe in the caſe of our fellow-creatures, is in itſelf the moſt deciſive proof that the principle of the love of God, if not altogether extinct in us, is at leaſt in the loweſt poſſible degree of languor.

From examining the degree in which the bulk of nominal Chriſtians are defective in the love of God, if we proceed to inquire concern-

(a) The author is almoſt afraid of uſing the terms, leſt they ſhould convey an impreſſion of party feelings, of which he wiſhes this book to exhibit no traces; but he here means by Democrats and Jacobins, not perſons on whom party violence faſtens the epithet, but perſons who are really and avowedly ſuch.

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ing the ſtrength of their love towards their fellow-creatures, the writer is well aware of its being generally held, that here at leaſt they may rather challenge praiſe than ſubmit to cenſure. And the many beneficent inſtitutions in which this country abounds, probably above every other, whether in ancient or modern times, may be perhaps appealed to in proof of the opinion. Much of what might have been otherwiſe urged in the diſcuſſion of this topic, has been anticipated in the inquiry into the grounds of the extravagant eſtimation, aſſigned to amiable tempers and uſeful lives, when unconnected with religious principle. What was then ſtated may ſerve in many caſes to lower, in the preſent inſtance, the loftineſs of the pretenſions of theſe nominal Chriſtians; and we ſhall hereafter have occaſion to mention another conſideration, of which the effect muſt be, ſtill further to reduce their claims. Meanwhile, let it ſuffice to remark, that we muſt not reſt ſatisfied with merely ſuperficial appearances, if we would form a fair eſtimate of the degree of purity and vigour, in which the principle of good will towards men warms the boſoms of the generality of profeſſed Chriſtians in the higher and more opulent claſſes in this country. In a highly poliſhed ſtate of ſociety, for inſtance, we do not expect to find moroſeneſs; and in an age of great profuſion, though we may reflect with pleaſure on thoſe numerous charitable inſtitutions, which are juſtly the honour of Great Britain; we are not too haſtily to infer a ſtrong principle of internal benevolence, from liberal contributions to the relief of indigence and miſery. When theſe contributions indeed are equally abundant in frugal times, or from individuals perſonally œconomi-

cal, the ſource from which they originate becomes leſs queſtionable. But a vigorous principle of philanthropy muſt not be at once conceded, on the ground of liberal benefactions to the poor, in the caſe of one who by his liberality in this reſpect is curtailed in no neceſſary, is abridged of no luxury, is put to no trouble either of thought or of action; who, not to impute a deſire of being praiſed for his benevolence, is injured in no man's eſtimation; in whom alſo familiarity with large ſums has produced that freedom in the expenditure of money, which (thereby affording a freſh illuſtration of the juſtice of the old proverb, "Fami-"liarity breeds contempt,") it never fails to operate, except in minds under the influence of a ſtrong principle of avarice.

Our concluſion, perhaps, would be leſs favourable, but not leſs fair, if we were to try the characters in queſtion by thoſe ſurer teſts, which are ſtated by the Apoſtle to be leſs ambiguous marks of a real ſpirit of philanthropy. The ſtrength of every paſſion is to be eſtimated by its victory over paſſions of an oppoſite nature. What judgment then ſhall we form of the force of the benevolence of the age, when meaſured by this ſtandard? How does it ſtand the ſhock, when it comes into encounter with our pride, our vanity, our ſelf-love, our ſelf-intereſt, our love of eaſe or of pleaſure, with our ambition, with our deſire of worldly eſtimation? Does it make us ſelf-denying, that we may be liberal in relieving others? Does it make us perſevere in doing good in ſpite of ingratitude; and only pity the ignorance, or prejudice, or malice, which miſrepreſents our conduct, or miſconſtrues our motives? Does it make us forbear from what

what we conceive may probably prove the occaſion of harm to a fellow-creature; though the harm ſhould not ſeem naturally or even fairly to flow from our conduct, but to be the reſult only of his own obſtinacy or weakneſs? Are we ſlow to believe any thing to our neighbour's diſadvantage? and when we cannot but credit it, are we diſpoſed rather to cover, and as far as we juſtly can, to palliate, than to divulge or aggravate it? Suppoſe an opportunity to occur of performing a kindneſs, to one who from pride or vanity ſhould be loth to receive, or to be known to receive, a favour from us; ſhould we honeſtly endeavour, ſo far as we could with truth, to leſſen in his own mind and in that of others the merit of our good offices, and by ſo doing diſpoſe him to receive them with diminiſhed reluctance, and a leſs painful weight of obligation? This end, however, muſt be accompliſhed, if to be accompliſhed at all, by a ſimple and fair explanation of the circumſtances, which may render the action in no wiſe inconvenient to ourſelves, though highly beneficial to another; not by ſpeeches of affected diſparagement, which we might eaſily foreſee, and in fact do foreſee, muſt produce the contrary effect. Can we, from motives of kindneſs, incur or riſk the charge of being deficient in ſpirit, in penetration, or in foreſight? Do we tell another of his faults, when the communication, though probably beneficial to *him*, cannot be made without embarraſſment or pain to ourſelves, and may probably leſſen his regard for our perſon, or his opinion of our judgment? Can we ſtifle a repartee which would wound another; though the utterance of it would gratify our vanity, and the ſuppreſſion of it may diſparage our character for wit? If any

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one advance a miſtaken propoſition, in an inſtance wherein the error may be miſchievous to him; can we, to the prejudice perhaps of our credit for diſcernment, forbear to contradict him in public, if it be probable that in ſo doing, by piquing his pride we might only harden him in his error? and can we reſerve our counſel for ſome more favourable ſeaſon, the "mollia tempora fandi," when it may be communicated without offence? If we have recommended to any one a particular line of conduct, or have pointed out the probable miſchiefs of the oppoſite courſe, and if our admonitions have been neglected, are we *really hurt* when our predictions of evil are accompliſhed? Is our love ſuperior to envy, and jealouſy, and emulation? Are we acute to diſcern and forward to embrace any fair opportunity of promoting the intereſts of another; if it be in a line wherein we ourſelves alſo are moving, and in which we think our progreſs has not been proportioned to our deſert? Can we take pleaſure in bringing his merits into notice, and in obviating the prejudices which may have damped his efforts, or in removing the obſtacles which may have retarded his advancement? If even to this extent we ſhould be able to ſtand the ſcrutiny, let it be farther aſked how, in the caſe of our enemies, do we correſpond with the Scripture repreſentations of love? Are we meek under provocations, ready to forgive, and apt to forget injuries? Can we, with ſincerity, "bleſs them that curſe us, do good to them "that hate us, and pray for them which de-"ſpitefully uſe us, and perſecute us?" Do we prove to the Searcher of hearts a real ſpirit of forgiveneſs, by our forbearing not only from avenging an injury when it is in our power, but even

even from telling to any one how ill we have been uſed; and that too when we are not kept ſilent by a conſciouſneſs that we ſhould loſe credit by divulging the circumſtance? And laſtly, Can we not only be content to return our enemies good for evil, (for this return, as has been remarked by one of the greateſt of uninſpired authorities, *(a)* may be prompted by pride and repaid by ſelf-complacency) but, when they are ſucceſsful or unſucceſsful without our having contributed to their good or ill fortune, can we not only be content, but cordially rejoice in their proſperity, or ſympathize with their diſtreſſes?

Theſe are but a few ſpecimens of the characteriſtic marks which might be ſtated, of a true predominant benevolence; yet even theſe may ſerve to convince us how far the bulk of nominal Chriſtians fall ſhort of the requiſitions of Scripture, even in that particular, which exhibits their character in the moſt favourable point of view. The truth is, we do not enough call to mind the exalted tone of Scripture morality; and are therefore apt to value ourſelves on the heights to which we attain, when a better acquaintance with our ſtandard would have convinced us of our falling far ſhort of the elevation preſcribed to us. It is in the very inſtance of the moſt difficult of the duties lately ſpecified, the forgiveneſs and love of enemies, that our Saviour points out to our imitation the example of our Supreme Benefactor. After ſtating that, by being kind and courteous to thoſe who, even in the world's opinion, had a title to our good offices and good will, we ſhould in vain ſet up a claim to *Chriſtian* benevolence, he em-

(a) Lord Bacon.

phatically

phatically adds, "Be ye therefore perfect, even "as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

We muſt here again reſort to a topic which was lately touched on, that of theatrical amuſements; and recommend it to their advocates to conſider them in connection with the duty, of which we have now been exhibiting ſome of the leading characters.

It is an undeniable fact, for the truth of which we may ſafely appeal to every age and nation, that the ſituation of the performers, particularly of thoſe of the female ſex, is remarkably unfavourable to the maintenance and growth of the religious and moral principle, and of courſe highly dangerous to their eternal intereſts. Might it not then be fairly aſked, how far, in all who confeſs the truth of this poſition, it is conſiſtent with the ſenſibility of Chriſtian benevolence, merely for the entertainment of an idle hour, to encourage the continuance of any of their fellow-creatures in ſuch a way of life, and to take a part in tempting any others to enter into it? how far, conſidering that, by their own conceſſion, they are employing whatever they ſpend in this way, in ſuſtaining and advancing the cauſe of vice, and conſequently in promoting miſery; they are herein beſtowing this ſhare of their wealth in a manner agreeable to the intentions of their holy and benevolent Benefactor? how far alſo they are not in this inſtance the rather criminal, from there being ſo many ſources of innocent pleaſure open to their enjoyment? how far they are acting conformably to that golden principle of doing to others as we would they ſhould do to us? how far they harmonize with the ſpirit of the Apoſtle's affectionate declaration, that he would deny himſelf for his

his whole life the moſt innocent indulgence, nay, what might ſeem almoſt an abſolute neceſſary, rather than cauſe his weak fellow Chriſtian to offend? or laſtly, how far they are influenced by the ſolemn language of our Saviour himſelf; "It muſt needs be that offences come, but woe "to that man by whom the offence cometh; it "were better for him that a mill-ſtone were "hanged about his neck, and that he were caſt "into the depths of the ſea?" The preſent inſtance is perhaps another example of our taking greater concern in the temporal, than in the ſpiritual intereſts of our fellow creatures. That man would be deemed, and juſtly deemed, of an inhuman temper, who in theſe days were to ſeek his amuſement in the combats of gladiators and prize fighters: yet *Chriſtians* appear conſcious of no inconſiſtency, in finding their pleaſure in ſpectacles maintained at the riſk at leaſt, if not the ruin, of the eternal happineſs of thoſe who perform in them!

SECT. VI.

Grand defect.—Neglect of the peculiar Doctrines of Chriſtianity.

BUT the grand radical defect in the practical ſyſtem of theſe nominal Chriſtians, is their forgetfulneſs of all the peculiar doctrines of the Religion which they profeſs—the corruption of human nature—the atonement of the Saviour—and the ſanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit.

Here then we come again to the grand diſtinction, between the Religion of Chriſt and that of the

the bulk of nominal Chriſtians in the preſent day. The point is of the utmoſt *practical importance*, and we would therefore trace it into its actual effects.

There are, it is to be apprehended, not a few, who having been for ſome time hurried down the ſtream of diſſipation in the indulgence of all their natural appetites, (except, perhaps, that they were reſtrained from very groſs vice by a regard to character, or by the yet unſubdued voice of conſcience); and who, having all the while thought little, or ſcarcely at all about Religion, "living," to uſe the emphatical language of Scripture, "without God in the world," become in ſome degree impreſſed with a ſenſe of the infinite importance of Religion. A fit of ſickneſs, perhaps, or the loſs of ſome friend or much loved relative, or ſome other ſtroke of adverſe fortune, damps their ſpirits, awakens them to a practical conviction of the precarioufneſs of all human things, and turns them to ſeek for ſome more ſtable foundation of happineſs than this world can afford. Looking into themſelves ever ſo little, they become ſenſible that they muſt have offended God. They reſolve accordingly to ſet about the work of reformation.—Here it is that we ſhall recognize the fatal effects of the prevailing ignorance of the real nature of Chriſtianity, and the general forgetfulneſs of its grand peculiarities. Theſe men *wiſh* to reform, but they know neither the real *nature* of their diſtemper nor its true remedy. They are aware, indeed, that they muſt "ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do "well;" that they muſt relinquiſh their habits of vice, and attend more or leſs to the duties of Religion: but having no conception of the actual

tual malignity of the diſeaſe under which they labour, or of the perfect cure which the Goſpel has provided for it, or of the manner in which that cure is to be effected,

" They do but ſkin and film the ulcerous place,
" While rank corruption, mining all within,
" Infects unſeen."

It often happens therefore but too naturally in this caſe, that where they do not ſoon deſiſt from their attempt at reformation, and relapſe into their old habits of ſin; they take up with a partial and ſcanty amendment, and fondly flatter themſelves that it is a thorough change. They now conceive that they have a right to take to themſelves the comforts of Chriſtianity. Not being able to raiſe their practice up to their ſtandard of right, they lower their ſtandard to their practice: they ſit down for life contented with their preſent attainments, beguiled by the complacencies of their own minds, and by the favourable teſtimony of ſurrounding friends; and it often happens, particularly where there is any degree of ſtrictneſs in formal and ceremonial obſervances, that there are no people more jealous of their character for Religion.

Others perhaps go farther than this. The dread of the wrath to come has ſunk deeper into their hearts; and for a while they ſtrive with all their might to reſiſt their evil propenſities, and to walk without ſtumbling in the path of duty. Again and again they reſolve; again and again they break their reſolutions *(a)*: All their

(a) If any one would read a deſcription of this proceſs, enlivened and enforced by the powers of the moſt exquiſite poetry, let him peruſe the middle and latter part of the fifth Book,

their endeavours are foiled, and they become more and more convinced of their own moral weakneſs, and of the ſtrength of their indwelling corruption. Thus groaning under the enſlaving power of ſin, and experiencing the futility of the utmoſt efforts which they can uſe for effecting their deliverance, they are tempted (ſometimes it is to be feared they yield to the temptation) to give up all in deſpair, and to acquieſce under their wretched captivity, conceiving it impoſſible to break their chains. Sometimes, probably, it even happens that they are driven to ſeek for refuge from their diſquietude in the ſuggeſtions of infidelity; and to quiet their troubleſome conſciences by arguments which they themſelves ſcarcely believe, at the very moment in which they ſuffer themſelves to be lulled aſleep by them. In the mean time while this conflict has been going on, their walk is ſad and comfortleſs, and their couch is nightly watered with tears. Theſe men are purſuing the right object, but they miſtake the way in which it is to be obtained. *The path in which they are now treading is not that which the Goſpel has provided for conducting them to true holineſs, nor will they find in it any ſolid peace.*

Perſons under theſe circumſtances naturally ſeek for religious inſtruction. They turn over

Book of Cowper's Taſk. My warm attachment to the exquiſitely natural compoſitions of this truly Chriſtian poet may perhaps bias my judgment; but the part of the work to which I refer appears to me ſcarcely ſurpaſſed by any thing in our language. The honourable epithet of *Chriſtian* may juſtly be aſſigned to a poet, whoſe writings, while they faſcinate the reader by their manifeſtly coming from the heart, breathe throughout the ſpirit of that character of Chriſtianity, with which ſhe was announced to the world; "Glory to God, "peace on earth, good will towards men."

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the works of our modern Religioniſts, and as well as they can collect the advice addreſſed to men in their ſituation: the ſubſtance of it is, at the beſt, of this ſort; "Be ſorry indeed for "your ſins, and diſcontinue the practice of "them, but do not make yourſelves ſo uneaſy. "Chriſt died for the ſins of the whole world. "Do your utmoſt; diſcharge with fidelity the "duties of your ſtations, not neglecting your "religious offices; and fear not but that in the "end all will go well; and that having thus "performed the conditions required on your "part, you will at laſt obtain forgiveneſs of our "merciful Creator through the merits of Jeſus "Chriſt, and be aided, where your own "ſtrength ſhall be inſufficient, by the aſſiſtance "of his Holy Spirit. Meanwhile you cannot "do better than read carefully ſuch books of "practical divinity, as will inſtruct you in the "principles of a Chriſtian life. We are excel-"lently furniſhed with works of this nature; "and it is by the diligent ſtudy of them that "you will gradually become a proficient in the "leſſons of the Goſpel."

But the holy Scriptures, and with them the Church of England, call upon thoſe who are in the circumſtances above-ſtated, to *lay afreſh the whole foundation of their Religion.* In concurrence with the Scripture, that Church calls upon them, in the firſt place, gratefully to adore that undeſerved goodneſs which has awakened them from the ſleep of death; to proſtrate themſelves before the Croſs of Chriſt with humble penitence and deep ſelf-abhorrence; ſolemnly reſolving to forſake all their ſins, but relying on the Grace of God alone for power to keep their reſolution. Thus, and thus only, ſhe aſ-

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ſures them that all their crimes will be blotted out, and that they will receive from above a new living principle of holineſs. She produces from the Word of God the ground and warrant of her counſel; "Believe in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, "and thou ſhalt be ſaved."—"No man," ſays our bleſſed Saviour, "cometh unto the Father "but by me."—"I am the true Vine. As the "branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf except it "abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye "abide in me."—"He that abideth in me and "I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; "for without" (or ſevered from) "me ye can "do nothing,"—"By grace ye are ſaved "through faith, and that not of yourſelves, it "is the gift of God; not of works, leſt any "man ſhould boaſt: for we are his workman-"ſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto good "works."

Let us not be thought tedious, or be accuſed of running into needleſs repetitions, in preſſing this point with ſo much earneſtneſs. It is in fact a point which can never be too much inſiſted on. It is the cardinal point on which the whole of Chriſtianity turns; on which it is peculiarly proper in this place to be perfectly diſtinct. There have been ſome who have imagined that the wrath of God was to be deprecated, or his favour conciliated, by auſterities and penances, or even by forms and ceremonies, and external obſervances. But all men of enlightened underſtandings, who acknowledge the moral government of God, muſt alſo acknowledge, that vice muſt offend and virtue delight him. In ſhort they muſt, more or leſs, aſſent to the Scripture declaration, "without holineſs no man ſhall ſee "the Lord." But the grand diſtinction, which

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ſubſiſts between the true Chriſtian and all other Religioniſts, (the claſs of perſons in particular whom it is our object to addreſs) is concerning the *nature* of this holineſs, and the *way in which it is to be obtained.* The views entertained by the latter, of the *nature* of holineſs, are of all degrees of inadequateneſs; and they conceive it is to be *obtained* by their own natural unaſſiſted efforts: or if they admit ſome vague indiſtinct notion of the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, it is unqueſtionably obvious, on converſing with them, that this does not conſtitute the *main practical* ground of their dependence. *But the nature of the holineſs, to which the deſires of the true Chriſtian are directed, is no other than the reſtoration of the image of God: and as to the manner of acquiring it, diſclaiming with indignation every idea of attaining it by his own ſtrength, all his hopes of poſſeſſing it reſt altogether on the divine aſſurances of the operation of the Holy Spirit, in thoſe who cordially embrace the Goſpel of Chriſt. He knows therefore that this holineſs is not to* PRECEDE *his reconciliation to God, and be its* CAUSE; *but to* FOLLOW *it, and be its* EFFECT. *That in ſhort it is by* FAITH IN CHRIST *only (a) that he is to be juſtified in the ſight of God; to be delivered from the condition of a child of wrath, and a ſlave of Satan; to be adopted into the family of God; to become an heir of God and a joint heir with Chriſt, entitled to all the privileges which belong to this high relation; here, to the Spirit of Grace, and a partial renewal after the image of his Creator; hereafter, to the more perfect poſſeſſion of the Divine likeneſs, and an inheritance of eternal glory.*

(a) Here again let it be remarked, that faith, where genuine, always ſuppoſes repentance, abhorrence of ſin, &c.

And

And as it is in this way, that, in obedience to the dictates of the Goſpel, the true Chriſtian muſt originally become poſſeſſed of the vital ſpirit and living principle of univerſal holineſs; ſo, in order to grow in grace, he muſt alſo ſtudy in the ſame ſchool; finding in the conſideration of the peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel, and in the contemplation of the life, and character, and ſufferings of our bleſſed Saviour, the elements of all practical wiſdom, and an inexhauſtible ſtorehouſe of inſtructions and motives, no otherwiſe to be ſo well ſupplied. From the neglect of theſe peculiar doctrines ariſe the main practical errors of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians. Theſe gigantic truths retained in view, would put to ſhame the littleneſs of their dwarfiſh morality. It would be impoſſible for them to make theſe harmonize with their low conceptions, of the wretchedneſs and danger of their natural ſtate, which is repreſented in Scripture as having ſo powerfully called forth the compaſſion of God, that he ſent his only begotten Son to reſcue us. Where *now* are their low conceptions of the worth of the ſoul, when means like theſe were taken to redeem it? Where *now* their inadequate conceptions of the guilt of ſin, for which in the divine counſels it ſeemed requiſite that an atonement no leſs coſtly ſhould be made, than that of the blood of the only begotten Son of God? How can they reconcile their low ſtandard of Chriſtian practice with the repreſentation of our being "temples of the Holy Ghoſt?" Their cold ſenſe of obligation, and ſcanty grudged returns of ſervice, with the glowing gratitude of thoſe who, having been "delivered "from the power of darkneſs, and tranſlated "into the kingdom of God's dear Son," may well

well conceive that the labours of a whole life will be but an imperfect expreſſion of their thankfulneſs.

The peculiar doctrines of the Goſpel being once admitted, the concluſions which have been now ſuggeſted are clear and obvious deductions of reaſon. But our neglect of theſe important truths is ſtill leſs pardonable, becauſe they are diſtinctly and repeatedly applied in Scripture to the very purpoſes in queſtion, and the whole ſuperſtructure of Chriſtian morals is grounded on their deep and ample baſis. Sometimes theſe truths are repreſented in Scripture, *generally*, as furniſhing Chriſtians with a vigorous and ever preſent principle of univerſal obedience. And our ſlowneſs in learning the leſſons of heavenly wiſdom is ſtill further ſtimulated, by almoſt every particular Chriſtian duty being occaſionally traced to them as to its proper ſource. They are every where repreſented as warming the hearts of the people of God on earth with continual admiration, and thankfulneſs, and love, and joy; as triumphing over the attack of the laſt great enemy, and as calling forth afreſh in Heaven the ardent effuſions of their unexhauſted gratitude.

If then we would indeed be "filled with wiſ-"dom and ſpiritual underſtanding;" if we would "walk worthy of the Lord unto all well "pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, "and increaſing in the knowledge of God;" here let us fix our eyes! "Laying aſide every "weight, and the ſin that does ſo eaſily beſet "us; let us run with patience the race that is "ſet before us, LOOKING UNTO JESUS, the Au-"thor and Finiſher of our faith, who for the "joy that was ſet before him endured the croſs,

"deſpiſing

" deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the " right hand of the throne of God *."

Here beſt we may learn the infinite *importance* of Chriſtianity. How little it can deſerve to be treated in that ſlight and ſuperficial way, in which it is in theſe days regarded by the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, who are apt to think it may be enough, and almoſt equally pleaſing to God, to be religious *in any way*, and upon *any* ſyſtem. What exquiſite folly it muſt be to riſk the ſoul on ſuch a venture, in direct contradiction to the dictates of reaſon, and the expreſs declaration of the word of God! " How ſhall we eſcape, if we " neglect ſo great ſalvation?"

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

Here we ſhall beſt learn the duty and reaſonableneſs of an abſolute and unconditional ſurrender of ſoul and body to the will and ſervice of God.—" We are not our own; for we are " bought with a price," and muſt " therefore" make it our grand concern to " glorify God with " our bodies and our ſpirits, which are God's." Should we be baſe enough, even if we could do it with ſafety, to make any reſerves in our returns of ſervice to that gracious Saviour, who " gave up *himſelf* for us?" If we have formerly talked of compounding by the performance of ſome commands for the breach of others; can we now bear the mention of a *compoſition* of duties, or of retaining to ourſelves the right of practiſing *little* ſins! The very ſuggeſtion of ſuch an idea fills us with indignation and ſhame, if our hearts be not dead to every ſenſe of gratitude.

* Heb. xii. 1, 2.

LOOKING

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

Here we find diſplayed, in the moſt lively colours, the guilt of ſin, and how hateful it muſt be to the perfect holineſs of that Being, "who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity." When we ſee that, rather than ſin ſhould go unpuniſhed, "God ſpared not his own Son," but "was *pleaſed (a)*, to bruiſe him and put him to "grief" for our ſakes; how vainly muſt impenitent ſinners flatter themſelves with the hope of eſcaping the vengeance of Heaven, and buoy themſelves up with I know not what deſperate dreams of the Divine benignity!

Here too we may anticipate the dreadful ſufferings of that ſtate, "where ſhall be weeping "and gnaſhing of teeth;" when rather than that we ſhould undergo them, "the Son of "God" himſelf, who "thought it no robbery to "be equal with God," conſented to take upon him our degraded nature with all its weakneſſes and infirmities; to be "a man of ſorrows," "to "hide not his face from ſhame and ſpitting," "to be wounded for our tranſgreſſions, and "bruiſed for our iniquities," and at length to endure the ſharpneſs of death, "even the death "of the Croſs," that he might "deliver us "from the wrath to come," and open the kingdom of Heaven to all believers.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

Here beſt we may learn to grow in the love of God! The certainty of his pity and love towards

(a) It has been well remarked that the word uſed, where it is ſaid, that God "was PLEASED to bruiſe" and put to grief his only Son for us, is the ſame word as that wherein it was declared by a voice from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son, in "whom I am well pleaſed."

repenting ſinners, thus irrefragably demonſtrated, chaſes away the ſenſe of tormenting fear, and beſt lays the ground in us of a reciprocal affection. And while we ſteadily contemplate this wonderful tranſaction, and conſider in its ſeveral relations the amazing truth, that "God ſpared "not his own Son, but delivered him up for us "all;" if our minds be not utterly dead to every impulſe of ſenſibility, the emotions of admiration, of preference, of hope, and truſt, and joy, cannot but ſpring up within us, chaſtened with reverential fear, and ſoftened and quickened by overflowing gratitude *(a)*. *Here* we ſhall become animated by an abiding diſpoſition to endeavour to pleaſe our great Benefactor; and by a humble perſuaſion, that the weakeſt endeavours of this nature will not be deſpiſed by a Being, who has already proved himſelf ſo kindly affected towards us *. *Here* we cannot fail to imbibe an earneſt deſire of poſſeſſing his favour, and a conviction, founded on his own declarations thus unqueſtionably confirmed, that the deſire ſhall not be diſappointed. Whenever we are conſcious that we have offended this gracious Being, a ſingle thought of the great work of Redemption will be enough to fill us with compunction. We ſhall feel a deep concern, grief mingled with indignant ſhame, for having conducted ourſelves ſo unworthily towards one who to us has been infinite in kindneſs: we ſhall not reſt till we have reaſon to hope that he is reconciled to us; and we ſhall watch over our hearts and conduct in future with a renewed jealouſy,

(a) Vide Chap. iii. Where theſe were ſhewn to be the elementary principles of the paſſion of love.

* Rom. v. 9, 10.

leſt

leſt we ſhould again offend him. To thoſe who are ever ſo little acquainted with the nature of the human mind, it were ſuperfluous to remark, that the affections and tempers which have been enumerated, are the infallible marks and the conſtituent properties of Love. Let *him* then who would abound and grow in this Chriſtian principle, be much converſant with the great doctrines of the Goſpel.

It is obvious, that the attentive and frequent conſideration of theſe great doctrines, muſt have a ſtill more direct tendency to produce and cheriſh in our minds the principle of the love of Chriſt. But on this head, ſo much was ſaid in a former chapter, as to render any farther obſervations unneceſſary.

Much alſo has been already obſerved concerning the love of our fellow-creatures, and it has been diſtinctly ſtated to be the indiſpenſable, and indeed the characteriſtic duty of Chriſtians. It remains, however to be here farther remarked, that this grace can no where be cultivated with more advantage than at the foot of the croſs. No where can our Saviour's dying injunction to the exerciſe of this virtue be recollected with more effect; "This is my commandment, that "ye love one another as I have loved you." No where can the admonition of the Apoſtle more powerfully affect us; "Be ye kind one to ano-"ther, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, "even as God, for Chriſt's ſake, hath forgiven "you." The view of mankind which is here preſented to us, as having been all involved in one common ruin; and the offer of deliverance held out to all, by the Son of God's giving of himſelf up to pay the price of our reconciliation, produce that ſympathy towards our fellow-crea-

tures, which, by the conſtitution of our nature, ſeldom fails to reſult from the conſciouſneſs of an identity of intereſts and a ſimilarity of fortunes. Pity for an unthinking world aſſiſts this impreſſion. Our enmities ſoften and melt away: we are aſhamed of thinking much of the *petty injuries* which we may have ſuffered, when we conſider what the Son of God, "who did no "wrong, neither was guile found in his mouth," patiently underwent. Our hearts become tender while we contemplate this ſignal act of loving-kindneſs. We grow deſirous of imitating what we cannot but admire. A vigorous principle of enlarged and active charity ſprings up within us; and we go forth with alacrity, deſirous of treading in the ſteps of our bleſſed Maſter, and of manifeſting our gratitude for his unmerited goodneſs, by bearing each others burdens, and abounding in the diſintereſted labours of benevolence.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

He was meek and lowly of heart, and from the ſtudy of *his* character we ſhall beſt learn the leſſons of humility. Contemplating the work of Redemption, we become more and more impreſſed with the ſenſe of our natural darkneſs, and helpleſſneſs, and miſery, from which it was requiſite to ranſom us at ſuch a price; more and more conſcious that we are utterly unworthy of all the amazing condeſcenſion and love which have been manifeſted towards us; aſhamed of the callouſneſs of our tendereſt ſenſibility, and of the poor returns of our moſt active ſervices. Conſiderations like theſe, abating our pride and reducing our opinion of *ourſelves*, naturally moderate

derate our pretenſions towards *others*. We become leſs diſpoſed to exact that reſpect for our perſons, and that deference for our authority, which we naturally covet; we leſs ſenſibly feel a ſlight, and leſs hotly reſent it; we grow leſs irritable, leſs prone to be diſſatisfied; more ſoft, and meek, and courteous, and placable, and condeſcending. We are not literally required to practiſe the ſame humiliating ſubmiſſions, to which our bleſſed Saviour himſelf was not aſhamed to ſtoop *; but the *ſpirit* of the remark applies to us, "the ſervant is not greater than "his Lord:" and we ſhould eſpecially bear this truth in mind, when the occaſion calls upon us to diſcharge ſome duty, or patiently to ſuffer ſome ill treatment, whereby our pride will be wounded, and we are likely to be in ſome degree degraded from the rank we had poſſeſſed in the world's eſtimation. At the ſame time the Sacred Scriptures aſſuring us, that to the powerful operations of the Holy Spirit, purchaſed for us by the death of Chriſt, we muſt be indebted for the ſucceſs of all our endeavours after improvement in virtue; the conviction of this truth tends to render us diffident of our own powers, and to ſuppreſs the firſt riſings of vanity. Thus, while we are conducted to heights of virtue no otherwiſe attainable, due care is taken to prevent our becoming giddy from our elevation *(a)*. It is the Scripture characteriſtic of the Goſpel ſyſtem, that by it all diſpoſition to exalt

* John xiii. 13—17. If I then, your Lord and Maſter, have waſhed your feet; ye alſo ought to waſh one another's feet, &c.

(a) Vide Paſcal's Thoughts on Religion—A book abounding in the deepeſt views of practical Chriſtianity.

ourſelves

ourſelves is excluded; and if we really grow in grace, we ſhall grow alſo in humility.

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

"He endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame."—While we ſteadily contemplate this ſolemn ſcene, that ſober frame of ſpirit is produced within us, which beſt befits the Chriſtian, militant here on earth. We become impreſſed with a ſenſe of the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of time, and that it behoves us to be diligent in making proviſion for eternity. In ſuch a temper of mind, the pomps and vanities of life are caſt behind us as the baubles of children.—We loſe our reliſh for the frolics of gaiety, the race of ambition, or the groſſer gratifications of voluptuouſneſs. In the caſe even of thoſe objects, which may more juſtly claim the attention of reaſonable and immortal beings; in our family arrangements, in our plans of life, in our ſchemes of buſineſs, we become, without relinquiſhing the path of duty, more moderate in purſuit, and more indifferent about the iſſue. Here alſo we learn to correct the world's falſe eſtimate of things, and to "look through the "ſhallowneſs of earthly grandeur *(a)*;" to venerate what is truly excellent and noble, though under a deſpiſed and degraded form; and to cultivate within ourſelves that true magnanimity, which can make us riſe ſuperior to the ſmiles or frowns of this world; that dignified compoſure of ſoul which no earthly incidents can deſtroy or ruffle. Inſtead of repining at any of the little occaſional inconveniences we may meet with in

(a) Pope.

our

our paſſage through life; we are almoſt aſhamed of the multiplied comforts and enjoyments of our condition, when we think of him, who, though "the Lord of glory," "had not where to lay "his head." And if it be our lot to undergo evils of more than ordinary magnitude, we are animated under them by reflecting, that we are hereby more conformed to the example of our bleſſed Maſter: though we muſt ever recollect one important difference, that the ſufferings of Chriſt were voluntarily borne for *our* benefit, and were probably far more exquiſitely agonizing than any which we are called upon to undergo. Beſides, it muſt be a ſolid ſupport to us amidſt all our troubles to know, that they do not happen to us by chance; that they are not even merely the puniſhment of ſin; but that they are the diſpenſations of a kind Providence, and ſent on meſſages of mercy.—"The cup that our Fa-"ther hath given us, ſhall we not drink it?"—"Bleſſed Saviour! by the bitterneſs of thy pains "we may eſtimate the force of thy love; we "are *ſure* of thy kindneſs and compaſſion; "thou wouldſt not willingly call on us to ſuffer; "thou haſt declared unto us, that all things "ſhall finally work together for good to them "that love thee; and therefore, if thou ſo or-"daineſt it, welcome diſappointment and po-"verty, welcome ſickneſs and pain, welcome "even ſhame, and contempt, and calumny. "If this be a rough and thorny path, it is one "in which thou haſt gone before us. Where "we ſee thy footſteps we cannot repine. Mean-"while, thou wilt ſupport us with the conſola-"tions of thy grace; and even here thou canſt "more than compenſate to us for any temporal "ſufferings, by the poſſeſſion of that peace,

"which

" which the world can neither give nor take " away."

LOOKING UNTO JESUS!

" The Author and Finiſher of our faith, " who for the joy that was ſet before him en- " dured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is " ſet down at the right hand of God." From the ſcene of our Saviour's weakneſs and degradation, we follow him, in idea, into the realms of glory, where " he is on the right hand of " God; angels, and principalities, and powers " being made ſubject unto him."—But though changed in place, yet not in nature, he is ſtill full of ſympathy and love; and having died " to " ſave his people from their ſins," " he ever " *liveth* to make interceſſion for them." Cheered by this animating view, the Chriſtian's fainting ſpirits revive. Under the heavieſt burdens he feels his ſtrength recruited; and when all around him is dark and ſtormy, he can lift up an eye to Heaven, radiant with hope, and gliſtening with gratitude. At ſuch a ſeaſon, no dangers can alarm, no oppoſition can move, no provocations can irritate. He may almoſt adopt, as the language of his ſober exultation, what in the philoſopher was but an idle rant: and, conſidering that it is only the garment of mortality which is ſubject to the rents of fortune; while his ſpirit, cheered with the divine ſupport, keeps its place within, ſecure and unaſſailable, he can ſometimes almoſt triumph at the ſtake, or on the ſcaffold, and cry out amidſt the ſevereſt buffets of adverſity, " Thou beateſt but the caſe of Anaxar- " chus." But it is rarely that the Chriſtian is elevated with this " joy unſpeakable and full of " glory:"

" glory :" he even lends himſelf to theſe views with moderation and reſerve. Often, alas! emotions of another kind fill him with grief and confuſion: and conſcious of having acted unworthy of his high calling, perhaps of having expoſed himſelf to the juſt cenſure of a world ready enough to ſpy out his infirmities, he ſeems to himſelf almoſt " to have crucified the " Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open " ſhame." But let neither his joys intoxicate, nor his ſorrows too much depreſs him. Let him ſtill remember that his *chief* buſineſs while on earth is not to meditate, but to act; that the ſeeds of moral corruption are apt to ſpring up within him, and that it is requiſite for him to watch over his own heart with inceſſant care; that he is to diſcharge with fidelity the duties of his particular ſtation, and to conduct himſelf, according to his meaſure, after the example of his bleſſed Maſter, whoſe meat and drink it was to do the work of his heavenly Father; that he is diligently to cultivate the talents with which God has entruſted him, and aſſiduouſly to employ them in doing juſtice and ſhewing mercy, while he guards againſt the aſſaults of any internal enemy. In ſhort, he is to demean himſelf, in all the common affairs of life, like an *accountable* creature, who, in correſpondence with the Scripture character of Chriſtians, is " waiting " for the coming of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt." Often therefore he queſtions himſelf, " Am I " employing my time, my fortune, my bodily " and mental powers, ſo as to be able to 'ren- " der up my account with joy, and not with " grief?' Am I 'adorning the doctrine of God " my Saviour in all things;' and proving that " the ſervants of Chriſt, animated by a princi-

" ple of filial affection, which renders their " work a ſervice of perfect freedom, are capa- " ble of as active and as perſevering exertions, " as the votaries of fame, or the ſlaves of ambi- " tion, or the drudges of avarice ?"

Thus, without interruption to his labours, he may interpoſe occaſional thoughts of things unſeen ; and amidſt the many little intervals of buſineſs, may calmly look upwards to the heavenly Advocate, who is ever pleading the cauſe of his people, and obtaining for them needful ſupplies of grace and conſolation. It is theſe realizing views, which give the Chriſtian a reliſh for the worſhip and ſervice of the heavenly world. And if theſe bleſſed images, " ſeen but through a " glaſs darkly," can thus refreſh the ſoul : what muſt be its ſtate, when on the morning of the reſurrection it ſhall awake to the unclouded viſion of celeſtial glory ! when, " to them that " look for him, the Son of God ſhall appear a " ſecond time without ſin unto ſalvation !" when " ſighing and ſorrow being fled away ;" when doubts and fears no more diſquieting, and the painful conſciouſneſs of remaining imperfections no longer weighing down the ſpirit, they ſhall enter upon the fruition of " thoſe joys, " which eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nei- " ther has it entered into the heart of man to " conceive ;" and ſhall bear their part in that bleſſed anthem—" Salvation to our God which " ſitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb," for ever and ever !

Thus (never let it be forgotten) the main diſtinction between real Chriſtianity, and the ſyſtem of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, chiefly conſiſts in the different place which is aſſigned in the two ſchemes to the peculiar doctrines of the

the Goſpel. Theſe, in the ſcheme of nominal Chriſtians, if admitted at all, appear but like the ſtars of the firmament to the ordinary eye. Thoſe ſplendid luminaries draw forth perhaps occaſionally a tranſient expreſſion of admiration, when we behold their beauty, or hear of their diſtances, magnitudes, or properties; now and then too we are led, perhaps, to muſe upon their poſſible uſes: but however curious as ſubjects of ſpeculation, after all, it muſt be confeſſed, they twinkle to the common obſerver with a vain and "idle" luſtre; and except in the dreams of the aſtrologer, have no influence on human happineſs, or any concern with the courſe and order of the world. But to the *real* Chriſtian, on the contrary, THESE *peculiar doctrines conſtitute the center to which he gravitates! the very ſun of his ſyſtem! the ſoul of the world! the origin of all that is excellent and lovely! the ſource of light, and life, and motion, and genial warmth, and plaſtic energy!* Dim is the light of reaſon, and cold and comfortleſs our ſtate, while left to her unaſſiſted guidance. Even the Old Teſtament itſelf, though a revelation from Heaven, ſhines but with feeble and ſcanty rays. But the bleſſed truths of the Goſpel are now unveiled to *our* eyes, and *we* are called upon to behold, and to enjoy "the light "of the knowledge of the glory of God, in "the face of Jeſus Chriſt," in the full radiance of its meridian ſplendor. The words of inſpiration beſt expreſs our highly favoured ſtate: "We "all, with open face beholding as in a glaſs the "glory of the Lord, are changed into the ſame "image, from glory to glory, even as by the "Spirit of the Lord."

Thou art the ſource and center of all minds,
Their only point of reſt, ETERNAL WORD

From

From thee departing, they are loſt, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace:
From thee is all that ſoothes the life of man;
His high endeavour, and his glad ſucceſs;
His ſtrength to ſuffer, and his will to ſerve.
But O! thou bounteous Giver of all good!
Thou art of all thy gifts thyſelf the crown:
Give what thou canſt, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away.

CHAPTER V.

On the Excellence of Chriſtianity in certain important Particulars. Argument which reſults thence in Proof of its divine Origin.

THE writer of the preſent work, having now completed a faint delineation of the leading features of real Chriſtianity, may be permitted to ſuſpend for a few moments the farther execution of his plan, for the purpoſe of pointing out ſome excellences which ſhe really poſſeſſes; but which, as they are not to be found in that ſuperficial ſyſtem which ſo unworthily uſurps her name, appear ſcarcely to have attracted ſufficient notice. If he ſhould ſeem to be deviating from the plan which he propoſed to himſelf, he would ſuggeſt as his excuſe; that the obſervations which he is about to offer will furniſh a ſtrong argument, in favour of the correctneſs of his preceding delineation of Chriſtianity, ſince ſhe will *now* appear to exhibit more clearly, than as ſhe is uſually drawn, the characters of her Divine original.

It holds true, indeed, in the caſe of Chriſtianity, as in that of all the works of God, that though

though a ſuperficial and curſory view cannot fail to diſcover to us ſomewhat of their beauty; yet, when on a more careful and accurate ſcrutiny we become better acquainted with their properties, we become alſo more deeply impreſſed by a conviction of their excellence. We may begin by referring to the laſt chapter for an inſtance of the truth of this aſſertion. Therein was pointed out that intimate connection, that perfect harmony, between the leading doctrines and the practical precepts of Chriſtianity, which is apt to eſcape the attention of the ordinary eye.

It may not be improper alſo to remark, though the poſition be ſo obvious as almoſt to render the ſtatement of it needleſs, that there is the ſame cloſe connection and perfect harmony in the leading doctrines of Chriſtianity among each other. It is ſelf-evident, that the corruption of human nature, that our reconciliation to God by the atonement of Chriſt, and that the reſtoration of our primitive dignity by the ſanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, are all parts of one whole, united in cloſe dependence and mutual congruity.

Perhaps, however, it has not been ſufficiently noticed, that in the chief practical precepts of Chriſtianity, there is the ſame eſſential agreement, the ſame mutual dependency of one upon another. Let us ſurvey this freſh inſtance of the wiſdom of that ſyſtem, which is the only ſolid foundation of our preſent or future happineſs.

The virtues moſt ſtrongly and repeatedly enjoined in Scripture, and by our progreſs in which we may beſt meaſure our advancement in holineſs, are the fear and love of God and of Chriſt; love, kindneſs, and meekneſs towards our fellow-creatures; indifference to the poſſeſ-

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ſions and events of this life, in compariſon with our concern about eternal things; ſelf-denial, and humility.

It has been already pointed out in many particulars, how eſſentially ſuch of theſe Chriſtian graces as reſpect the Divine Being are connected with thoſe, which have more directly for their objects our fellow-creatures and ourſelves. But in the caſe of theſe two laſt deſcriptions of Chriſtian graces; the more attentively we conſider them with reference to the acknowledged principles of human nature, and to indiſputable facts, the more we ſhall be convinced that they afford mutual aid towards the acquiſition of each other; and that when acquired, they all harmonize with each other in perfect and eſſential union. This truth may perhaps be ſufficiently apparent from what has been already remarked; but it may not be uſeleſs to dwell on it a little more in detail. Take then the inſtances of loving-kindneſs and meekneſs towards others; and obſerve the ſolid foundation which is laid for them in ſelf-denial, in moderation as to the good things of this life, and in humility. The chief cauſes of enmity among men are, pride and ſelf-importance, the high opinion which men entertain of themſelves, and the conſequent deference which they exact from others: the over-valuation of worldly poſſeſſions and of worldly honours, and in conſequence, a too eager competition for them. The rough edges of one man rub againſt thoſe of another, if the expreſſion may be allowed; and the friction is often ſuch as to injure the works, and diſturb the juſt arrangements and regular motions of the ſocial machine. But by Chriſtianity all theſe roughneſſes are filed down; every wheel rolls round

round ſmoothly in the performance of its appointed function, and there is nothing to retard the ſeveral movements, or break in upon the general order. The religious ſyſtem indeed of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians is ſatisfied with ſome tolerable appearances of virtue: and accordingly, while it recommends love and beneficence, it tolerates, as has been ſhewn, pride and vanity in many caſes; it even countenances and commends the exceſſive valuation of character; and at leaſt allows a man's whole ſoul to be abſorbed in the purſuit of the object which he is following, be it what it may of perſonal or profeſſional ſucceſs. But though theſe latter qualities may, for the moſt part, fairly enough conſiſt with a ſoft exterior and courtly demeanor, they cannot ſo well accord with the genuine internal principle of love. Some cauſe of diſcontent, ſome ground of jealouſy or of envy will ariſe, ſome ſuſpicion will corrode, ſome diſappointment will ſour, ſome ſlight or calumny will irritate and provoke repriſals. In the higher walks of life, indeed, we learn to diſguiſe our emotions; but ſuch will be the real inward feelings of the ſoul, and they will frequently betray themſelves when we are off our guard, or when we are not likely to be diſparaged by the diſcovery. This ſtate of the higher orders, in which men are ſcuffling eagerly for the ſame objects, and wearing all the while ſuch an appearance of ſweetneſs and complacency, has often appeared to me to be not ill illuſtrated by the image of a gaming table. There, every man is intent only on his own profit; the good ſucceſs of one is the ill ſucceſs of another, and therefore the general ſtate of mind of the parties engaged may be pretty well conjectured. All this, however, does not prevent, in well-bred

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ſocieties, an exterior of perfect gentleneſs and good humour. But let the ſame employment be carried on among the lower orders, who are not ſo well ſchooled in the art of diſguiſing their feelings; or in places where, by general connivance, people are allowed to give vent to their real emotions; and every paſſion will diſplay itſelf, by which the "human face divine" can be diſtorted and deformed. For thoſe who never have been preſent at ſo humiliating a ſcene, the pencil of Hogarth has provided a repreſentation of it, which is ſcarcely exaggerated; and the horrid name *, by which it is familiarly known among its frequenters, ſufficiently atteſts the fidelity of its reſemblance.

But Chriſtianity is not ſatisfied with producing merely the ſpecious guiſe of virtue. She requires the ſubſtantial reality, which may ſtand the ſcrutinizing eye of that Being "who "ſearches the heart. Meaning therefore that the Chriſtian ſhould live and breathe, in an atmoſphere, as it were, of benevolence, ſhe forbids whatever can tend to obſtruct its diffuſion or vitiate its purity. It is on this principle that Emulation is forbidden: for, beſides that this paſſion almoſt inſenſibly degenerates into envy, and that it derives its origin chiefly from pride and a deſire of ſelf-exaltation; how can we eaſily love our neighbour as ourſelves, if we conſider him at the ſame time our rival, and are intent upon ſurpaſſing him in the purſuit of whatever is the ſubject of our competition?

Chriſtianity, again, teaches us not to ſet our hearts on earthly poſſeſſions and earthly honours;

* The *Hell*, ſo called, be it obſerved, not by way of reproach, but familiarity, by thoſe who frequent it.

and

and thereby provides for our really loving, or even cordially forgiving, thoſe who have been more ſucceſsful than ourſelves in the attainment of them, or who have even deſignedly thwarted us in the purſuit. "Let the rich," ſays the Apoſtle, "rejoice in that he is brought low." How can he who means to attempt, in any degree, to obey this precept, be irreconcilably hoſtile towards any one who may have been inſtrumental in his depreſſion?

Chriſtianity alſo teaches us not to prize human eſtimation at a very high rate; and thereby provides for the practice of her injunction, to love from the heart thoſe who, juſtly or unjuſtly, may have attacked our reputation, and wounded our character. She commands not the ſhew, but the reality of meekneſs and gentleneſs; and by thus taking away the aliment of anger and the fomenters of diſcord, ſhe provides for the maintenance of peace, and the reſtoration of good temper among men, when it may have ſuſtained a temporary interruption.

It is another capital excellence of Chriſtianity, that ſhe values moral attainments at a far higher rate than intellectual acquiſitions, and propoſes to conduct her followers to the heights of virtue rather than of knowledge. On the contrary, moſt of the falſe religious ſyſtems which have prevailed in the world, have propoſed to reward the labour of their votary, by drawing aſide the veil which concealed from the vulgar eye their hidden myſteries, and by introducing him to the knowledge of their deeper and more ſacred doctrines.

This is eminently the caſe in the Hindoo, and in the Mahometan Religion, in that of China, and, for the moſt part, in the various modifications

tions of ancient Paganiſm. In ſyſtems which proceed on this principle, it is obvious that the bulk of mankind can never make any great proficiency. There was accordingly, among the nations of antiquity, one ſyſtem, whatever it was, for the learned, and another for the illiterate. Many of the philoſophers ſpoke out, and profeſſed to keep the lower orders in ignorance for the general good; plainly ſuggeſting that the bulk of mankind was to be conſidered as almoſt of an inferior ſpecies. Ariſtotle himſelf countenanced this opinion. An oppoſite mode of proceeding naturally belongs to Chriſtianity, which without diſtinction profeſſes an equal regard for all human beings, and which was characterized by her firſt Promulgator as the meſſenger of "glad tidings to the poor."

But her preference of moral to intellectual excellence is not to be praiſed, only becauſe it is congenial with her general character, and ſuitable to the ends which ſhe profeſſes to have in view. It is the part of true wiſdom to endeavour to excel there, where we may really attain to excellence. This conſideration might be alone ſufficient to direct our efforts to the acquiſition of virtue rather than of knowledge.—How limited is the range of the greateſt human abilities! how ſcanty the ſtores of the richeſt human knowledge! Thoſe who undeniably have held the firſt rank, both for natural and acquired endowments, inſtead of thinking their pre-eminence a juſt ground of ſelf-exaltation, have commonly been the moſt forward to confeſs that their views were bounded and their attainments moderate. Had they indeed been leſs candid, this is a diſcovery which we could not have failed to make of ourſelves. Experience daily furniſhes us with examples of weakneſs, and ſhort-

ſhort-ſightedneſs, and error, in the wiſeſt and the moſt learned of men, which might ſerve to confound the pride of human wiſdom.

Not ſo in morals.—Made at firſt in the likeneſs of God, and ſtill bearing about us ſome faint traces of our high original, we are offered by our bleſſed Redeemer the means of purifying ourſelves from our corruptions, and of once more regaining the image of our Heavenly Father *. In love, the compendious expreſſion for almoſt every virtue, in fortitude under all its forms, in juſtice, in humility, and in all the other graces of the Chriſtian character, we are made capable of attaining to heights of real elevation: and were we but faithful in the uſe of the means of grace which we enjoy; the operations of the Holy Spirit, prompting and aiding our diligent endeavours, would infallibly crown our labours with ſucceſs, and make us partakers of a Divine nature. The writer has himſelf known ſome who have been inſtances of the truth of this remark. To the memory of one, *(a)* now no more, may he be permitted to offer the laſt tribute of reſpectful friendſhip? His courſe, ſhort but laborious, has at length terminated in a better world; and his luminous tract ſtill ſhines in the ſight, and animates the efforts of all who knew him, and "marſhals "them the way" to Heavenly glory. Let me not be thought to undervalue any of the gifts of God, or of the fruits of human exertion: but let not theſe be prized beyond their proper worth. If one of thoſe little induſtrious reptiles, to which we have been well ſent for a leſ-

* Eph. ii.

(a) The Rev. Matthew Babington of Temple Rothley, in Leiceſterſhire, who died lately at Liſbon.

ſon

ſon of diligence and foreſight, were to pride itſelf upon its ſtrength, becauſe it could carry off a larger grain of wheat than any other of its fellow-ants; ſhould we not laugh at the vanity which could be highly gratified with ſuch a contemptible pre-eminence? And is it far different to the eye of reaſon, when man, weak, ſhort-ſighted man, is vain of ſurpaſſing others in knowledge, in which at beſt his progreſs muſt be ſo limited; forgetting the true dignity of his nature, and the path which would conduct him to real excellence?

The unparalleled value of the precepts of Chriſtianity ought not be paſſed over altogether unnoticed in this place, though it be needleſs to dwell on it; ſince it has been often juſtly recognized and aſſerted, and has in ſome points been ably illuſtrated, and powerfully enforced by the maſterly pen of a late writer. It is by no means however the deſign of this little work to attempt to trace the various excellencies of Chriſtianity; but it may not have been improper to point out a few particulars, which, in the courſe of inveſtigation, have naturally fallen under our notice, and hitherto perhaps may ſcarcely have been enough regarded. Every ſuch inſtance, it ſhould always be remembered, is a freſh proof of Chriſtianity being a revelation from God.

It is ſtill leſs, however, the intention of the writer to attempt to vindicate the Divine origin of our Holy Religion. This taſk has often been executed by far abler advocates. In particular, every Chriſtian, with whatever reſerves his commendations muſt be diſqualified, ſhould be forward to confeſs his obligations *on this head* to the author before alluded to; whoſe uncommon acuteneſs has enabled him, in a field already ſo much

much trodden, to discover arguments which had eluded the observation of all by whom he was preceded, and whose unequalled perspicuity puts his reader in complete possession of the fruits of his sagacity. Anxious, however, in my little measure, to contribute to the support of this great cause, may it be permitted me to state one argument, which impresses my mind with particular force. This is, the great variety of the *kinds* of evidence which have been adduced in proof of Christianity, and the confirmation thereby afforded of its truth:—the proof from prophecy—from miracles—from the character of Christ—from that of his Apostles—from the nature of the doctrines of Christianity—from the nature and excellence of her *practical precepts*—from the accordance we have lately pointed out between the doctrinal and practical system of Christianity, whether considered each in itself or in their mutual relation to each other—from other species of internal evidence, afforded in the more abundance in proportion as the sacred records have been scrutinized with greater care—from the account of co-temporary or nearly co-temporary writers—from the impossibility of accounting on any other supposition, than that of the truth of Christianity, for its promulgation and early prevalence: these and other lines of argument have all been brought forward and ably urged by different writers, in proportion as they have struck the minds of different observers more or less forcibly. Now, granting that some obscure and illiterate men, residing in a distant province of the Roman empire, had plotted to impose a forgery upon the world; though some foundation for the imposture might, and indeed must, have been attempted to be laid; it seems, at least

leaſt to my underſtanding, morally impoſſible that *ſo many different ſpecies of proofs*, and all ſo ſtrong, ſhould have lent their *concurrent* aid, and have united their *joint* force in the eſtabliſhment of the falſehood. It may aſſiſt the reader in eſtimating the value of this argument, to conſider upon how different a footing, in this reſpect, has reſted every other religious ſyſtem, without exception, which was ever propoſed to the world; and, indeed, every other hiſtorical fact, of which the truth has been at all conteſted.

CHAPTER VI.

Brief Inquiry into the preſent State of Chriſtianity in this Country, with ſome of the Cauſes which have led to its critical Circumſtances. Its Importance to us as a political Community, and practical Hints for which the foregoing Conſiderations give occaſion.

IT may not be altogether improper to remind the reader, that hitherto our diſcuſſion has been concerning the prevailing Religious opinions merely of *profeſſed Chriſtians:* no longer confining ourſelves to perſons of this deſcription, let us now extend our inquiry, and briefly inveſtigate the *general* ſtate of Chriſtianity in this country.

The tendency of Religion in general to promote the temporal well-being of political communities, is a fact which depends on ſuch obvious and undeniable principles, and which is ſo forcibly inculcated by the hiſtory of all ages, that there can be no neceſſity for entering into a formal

formal proof of its truth. It has indeed been maintained, not merely by Schoolmen and Divines, but by the moſt celebrated philoſophers, and moraliſts, and politicians of every age.

The peculiar excellence in this reſpect alſo of Chriſtianity, conſidered independently of its truth or falſehood, has been recognized by many writers, who, to ſay the leaſt, were not diſpoſed to exaggerate its merits. Either or both of theſe propoſitions being admitted, the ſtate of Religion in a country at any given period, not to mention its connection with the eternal happineſs of the inhabitants, immediately becomes a queſtion of great *political* importance: and in particular it muſt be material to aſcertain whether Religion be in an advancing or in a declining ſtate; and if the latter be the caſe, whether there be any practicable means for preventing at leaſt its farther declenſion.

If the repreſentations contained in the preceding chapters, of the ſtate of Chriſtianity among the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians, be not very erroneous; they may well excite ſerious apprehenſion in the mind of every reader, when conſidered merely in a political view. And this apprehenſion would be encreaſed, if there ſhould appear reaſon to believe that, for ſome time paſt, Religion has been on the decline amongſt us, and that it continues to decline at the preſent moment.

When it is propoſed, however, to inquire into the actual ſtate of Religion in any country, and in particular to compare that ſtate with its condition at any former period; there is one preliminary obſervation to be made, if we would not be liable to groſs error. There exiſts, eſtabliſhed by tacit conſent, in every country, what may be called

called a general ſtandard or tone of morals, varying in the ſame community at different periods, and different at the ſame period in different ranks and ſituations in ſociety. Whoever falls below this ſtandard, and, not unfrequently, whoever alſo riſes above it, offending againſt this general rule, ſuffers proportionably in the general eſtimation. Thus a regard for character, which, as was formerly remarked, is commonly the grand governing principle among men, becomes to a certain degree, though no farther, an incitement to morality and virtue. It follows of courſe, that where the practice does no more than come up to the required level, it will be no ſufficient evidence of the exiſtence, much leſs will it furniſh any juſt meaſure of the force, of a real internal principle of Religion. Chriſtians, Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Heretics, perſons of ten thouſand different ſorts of paſſions and opinions, being members at the ſame time of the ſame community, and all conſcious that they will be examined by this ſame ſtandard, will regulate their conduct accordingly, and, with no great difference, will all adjuſt themſelves to the required meaſure.

It muſt alſo be remarked, that the cauſes which tend to raiſe or to depreſs this ſtandard, commonly produce their effects by ſlow and almoſt inſenſible degrees; and that it often continues for ſome time nearly the ſame, when the circumſtances, by which it was fixed, have materially altered.

It is a truth which will hardly be conteſted, that Chriſtianity, whenever it has at all prevailed, has raiſed the general ſtandard of morals to a height before unknown. Some actions, which among the ancients were ſcarcely held to be blemiſhes

blemiſhes in the moſt excellent characters, have been juſtly conſidered by the laws of every Chriſtian community, as meriting the ſevereſt puniſhments. In other inſtances, virtues formerly rare have become common; and in particular a merciful and courteous temper has ſoftened the rugged manners, and humanized the brutal ferocity prevalent among the moſt poliſhed nations of the heathen world. But from what has been recently obſerved, it is manifeſt, that, ſo far as external appearances are concerned, theſe effects, when once produced by Chriſtianity, are produced alike in thoſe who deny and in thoſe who admit her divine original; I had almoſt ſaid in theſe who reject and thoſe who cordially embrace the doctrines of the Goſpel: and theſe effects might and probably would remain for a while, without any great apparent alteration, however her ſpirit might languiſh, or even her authority decline. The form of the temple, as was once beautifully remarked, may continue, when the *dii tutelares* have left it. When we are inquiring therefore into the real ſtate of Chriſtianity at any period; if we would not be deceived in this important inveſtigation, it becomes us to be ſo much the more careful not to take up with ſuperficial appearances.

It may perhaps help us to aſcertain the advancing or declining ſtate of Chriſtianity in Great Britain at the preſent moment; and ſtill more to diſcover ſome of the cauſes by which that ſtate has been produced, to employ a little time in conſidering what might naturally be expected to be its actual ſituation; what advantages or diſadvantages ſuch a religion might be expected

to derive, from the circumſtances in which it has been placed among us, and from thoſe in which it ſtill continues.

Experience warrants, and reaſon juſtifies and explains the aſſertion, that Perſecution generally tends to quicken the vigour and extend the prevalence of the opinions which ſhe would eradicate. For the peace of mankind, it has grown, at length almoſt into an axiom, that "her de-"viliſh engine back recoils upon herſelf." Chriſtianity eſpecially has always thriven under perſecution. At ſuch a ſeaſon ſhe has no lukewarm profeſſors; no adherents concerning whom it is doubtful to what party they belong. The Chriſtian is then reminded at every turn, that his Maſter's kingdom is not of this world. When all on earth wears a black and threatening aſpect, he looks up to heaven for conſolation; he learns practically to conſider himſelf as a pilgrim and ſtranger. He then cleaves to fundamentals, and examines well his foundation, as at the hour of death. When Religion is in a ſtate of external quiet and proſperity, the contrary of all this naturally takes place. The ſoldiers of the church militant then forget that they are in a ſtate of warfare. Their ardour ſlackens, their zeal languiſhes. Like a colony long ſettled in a ſtrange country *(a)*, they are gradually aſſimilated in features, and demeanour, and language, to the native inhabitants, till at length almoſt every veſtige of peculiarity dies away.

If, in general, perſecution and proſperity be productive reſpectively of theſe oppoſite effects; this circumſtance alone might teach us what ex-

(a) The author muſt acknowledge himſelf indebted to Dr. OWEN for this illuſtration.

pectations

pectations to form concerning the ſtate of Chriſtianity in this country, where ſhe has long been embodied in an eſtabliſhment, which is intimately blended, and is generally and juſtly believed to have a common intereſt with our civil inſtitutions; which is liberally, though by no means too liberally, endowed, and, not more favoured in wealth than dignity, has been allowed "to exalt her mitred front in courts and "parliaments:" an eſtabliſhment—the offices in which are extremely numerous, and theſe, not like the prieſthood of the Jews, filled up from a particular race, or, like that of the Hindoos, held by a ſeparate caſt in entailed ſucceſſion; but ſupplied from every claſs, and branching by its widely extended ramifications into almoſt every individual family in the community: an eſtabliſhment—of which the miniſters are not, like the Roman Catholic clergy, debarred from forming matrimonial ties, but are allowed to unite themſelves, and multiply their holdings to the general maſs of the community by the cloſe bonds of family connection; not like ſome of the ſeverer of the religious orders, immured in colleges and monaſteries, but, both by law and cuſtom, permitted to mix without reſtraint in all the intercourſes of ſociety.

Such being the circumſtances of the paſtors of the church, let the community in general be ſuppoſed to have been for ſome time in a rapidly improving ſtate of commercial proſperity; let it alſo be ſuppoſed to have been making no unequal progreſs in all thoſe arts, and ſciences, and literary productions, which have ever been the growth of a poliſhed age, and are the ſure marks of a highly finiſhed condition of ſociety. It is not difficult to anticipate the effects likely to be

produced on *vital* Religion, both in the clergy and the laity, by ſuch a ſtate of external proſperity as has been aſſigned to them reſpectively. And theſe effects would be infallibly furthered, where the country in queſtion ſhould enjoy a free conſtitution of government. We formerly had occaſion to quote the remark of an accurate obſerver of the ſtage of human life, that a much looſer ſyſtem of morals commonly prevails in the higher, than in the middling and lower orders of ſociety. Now, in every country, of which the middling claſſes are daily growing in wealth and conſequence, by the ſucceſs of their commercial ſpeculations; and, moſt of all, in a country having ſuch a conſtitution as our own, where the acquiſition of riches is the poſſeſſion alſo of rank and power; with the comforts and refinements, the vices alſo of the higher orders are continually deſcending, and a miſchievous uniformity of ſentiments, and manners, and morals, gradually diffuſes itſelf throughout the whole community. The multiplication of great cities alſo, and above all, the habit, ever increaſing with the increaſing wealth of the country, of frequenting a ſplendid and luxurious metropolis, would powerfully tend to accelerate the diſcontinuance of the religious habits of a purer age, and to accompliſh the ſubſtitution of a more relaxed morality. And it muſt even be confeſſed, that the commercial ſpirit, much as we are indebted to it, is not naturally favourable to the maintenance of the religious principle in a vigorous and lively ſtate.

In times like theſe, therefore, the ſtrict precepts and ſelf-denying habits of Chriſtianity naturally ſlide into diſuſe; and even among the better ſort of Chriſtians, are likely to be ſoftened,

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ſo far at leaſt as to be rendered leſs abhorrent from the general diſpoſition to relaxation and indulgence. In ſuch proſperous circumſtances, men, in truth, are apt to think very little about religion. Chriſtianity, therefore, ſeldom occupying the attention of the bulk of nominal Chriſtians, and being ſcarcely at all the object of their ſtudy, we ſhould expect, of courſe, to find them extremely unacquainted with its tenets. Thoſe doctrines and principles indeed, which it contains in common with the law of the land, or which are ſanctioned by the general ſtandard of morals formerly deſcribed, being brought into continual notice and mention by the common occurrences of life, might continue to be recognized. But whatever ſhe contains peculiar to herſelf, and which ſhould not be habitually brought into recollection by the incidents of every day, might be expected to be leſs and leſs thought of, till at length it ſhould be almoſt wholly forgotten. Still more might this be naturally expected to become the caſe, if the peculiarities in queſtion ſhould be, from their very nature, at war with pride, and luxury, and worldly mindedneſs, the too general concomitants of rapidly increaſing wealth: and this would particularly happen among the laity; if the circumſtance of their having been at any time abuſed to purpoſes of hypocriſy or fanaticiſm, ſhould have prompted even ſome of the better diſpoſed of the clergy, perhaps from well intentioned though erroneous motives, to bring them forward leſs frequently in their diſcourſes on Religion.

When ſo many ſhould thus have been ſtraying out of the right path, ſome bold reformer might, from time to time, be likely to ariſe, who

who ſhould not unjuſtly charge them with their deviation: but, though right perhaps in the main; yet deviating himſelf alſo in an oppoſite direction, and creating diſguſt by his violence, or vulgarity, or abſurdities, he might fail, except in a few inſtances, to produce the effect of recalling them from their wanderings.

Still, however, the Divine Original of Chriſtianity would not be profeſſedly diſavowed; partly from a real, and more commonly from a political, deference for the eſtabliſhed faith, but moſt of all, from the bulk of mankind being not yet prepared, as it were, to throw away the ſcabbard, and to venture their eternal happineſs on the iſſue of its falſehood. Some bolder ſpirits, indeed, might be expected to deſpiſe the cautious moderation of theſe timid reaſoners, and to pronounce deciſively, that the Bible was a forgery: while the generality, profeſſing to believe it genuine, ſhould, leſs conſiſtently, be ſatisfied with remaining ignorant of its contents; and when preſſed, ſhould diſcover themſelves by no means to believe many of the moſt important particulars contained in it.

When, by the operation of cauſes like theſe, any country has at length grown into the condition which has been here ſtated; it is but too obvious, that, in the bulk of the community, Religion, already ſunk very low, muſt be haſtening faſt to her entire diſſolution. Cauſes, energetic and active like theſe, though accidental hindrances may occaſionally thwart their operation, will not at once become ſluggiſh and unproductive. Their effect is ſure; and the time is faſt approaching, when Chriſtianity will be almoſt as openly diſavowed in the language, as in fact it is already ſuppoſed to have diſappeared from

from the conduct of men; when infidelity will be held to be the neceſſary appendage of a man of faſhion, and *to believe* will be deemed the indication of a feeble mind and a contracted underſtanding.

Something like what have been here premiſed are the conjectures which we ſhould naturally be led to form, concerning the ſtate of Chriſtianity in this country, and its probable iſſue, from conſidering her own nature, and the peculiar circumſtances in which ſhe has been placed. That her real condition differs not much from the reſult of this reaſoning from probability, muſt, with whatever regret, be confeſſed by all who take a careful and impartial ſurvey of the actual ſituation of things among us. But our hypothetical delineation, if juſt, will have approved itſelf to the reader's conviction, as we have gone along, by ſuggeſting its archetypes; and we may therefore be ſpared the painful and invidious taſk of pointing out, in detail, the ſeveral particulars wherein our ſtatements are juſtified by facts. Every where we may actually trace the effects of increaſing wealth and luxury, in baniſhing one by one the habits, and new-modelling the phraſeology, of ſtricter times; and in diffuſing throughout the middle ranks thoſe relaxed morals and diſſipated manners, which were formerly confined to the higher claſſes of ſociety. We meet, indeed, with more refinement, and more generally with thoſe amiable courteſies which are its proper fruits: thoſe vices alſo have become leſs frequent, which naturally infeſt the darkneſs of a ruder and leſs poliſhed age, and which recede on the approach of light and civilization:

> Defluxit numerus Saturnius, & grave virus
> Munditiæ pepulere:

But

But with theſe groſſneſſes, Religion, on the other hand, has alſo declined; God is forgotten; his providence is exploded; his hand is lifted up, but we ſee it not; he multiplies our comforts, but we are not grateful; he viſits us with chaſtiſements, but we are not contrite. The portion of the week ſet apart to the ſervice of Religion we give up, without reluctance, to vanity and diſſipation. And it is much if, on the periodical return of a day of national humiliation, having availed ourſelves of the certainty of an interval from public buſineſs to ſecure a meeting for convivial purpoſes; we do not inſult the Majeſty of Heaven by feaſting and jollity, and thus deliberately diſclaim our being included in the ſolemn ſervices of this ſeaſon of penitence and recollection *(a)*.

But when there is not this open and ſhameleſs diſavowal of Religion, few traces of it are to be found. Improving in almoſt every other branch

(a) The author here alludes to what happened within his own knowledge; and he has been aſſured by others, on whoſe teſtimony he can rely, of ſeveral ſimilar inſtances. But to prevent miſconſtruction as to the incident which mainly gives riſe to the remark, he thinks it neceſſary to declare, that the account, which appeared in ſome of the news-papers, of an entertainment having been given by Mr. Pitt on the Faſt Day, is untrue; and he is glad of the opportunity, which the mention of this ſubject affords him, of contradicting a ſtatement which he can poſitively affirm to have been falſe. This is one of the many inſtances which ſhould enforce on the readers of news-papers, the *duty* of not *haſtily* giving credit to reports to the diſadvantage of *any* man, of *any* party. A perſon in a public ſtation muſt often acquieſce under the groſſeſt calumnies; unleſs he will undertake the vain and endleſs taſk of contradicting all the falſehoods which prejudice may conceive, and malignity propagate againſt him.—The writer may perhaps expreſs himſelf with the more feeling on this ſubject; becauſe he has often been, and, indeed, at this very moment is, in the circumſtances which he has ſtated.

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of knowledge, we have become leſs and leſs acquainted with Chriſtianity. The preceding chapters have pointed out, among thoſe who believe themſelves to be orthodox Chriſtians, a deplorable ignorance of the Religion they profeſs, an utter forgetfulneſs of the peculiar doctrines by which it is characterized, a diſpoſition to regard it as a mere ſyſtem of ethics, and, what might ſeem an inconſiſtency, at the ſame time a moſt inadequate idea of the nature and ſtrictneſs of its practical principles. This declenſion of Chriſtianity into a mere ſyſtem of ethics, may partly be accounted for, as has been lately ſuggeſted; by conſidering the corruption of our nature, what Chriſtianity is, and in what circumſtances ſhe has been placed in this country. But it has alſo been conſiderably promoted by one peculiar cauſe, on which, for many reaſons, it may not be improper to dwell a little more particularly.

Chriſtianity in its beſt days (for the credit of our repreſentations let this be remembered, by thoſe who object to our ſtatement as auſtere and contracted) was ſuch as it has been delineated in the preſent work. This was the Religion of the moſt eminent Reformers, of thoſe bright ornaments of our country who ſuffered martyrdom under queen Mary; of their ſucceſſors in the times of Elizabeth; in ſhort of all the pillars of our Proteſtant church; of many of its higheſt dignitaries; of Davenant, of Hall, of Reynolds, of Beveridge, of Hooker, of Andrews, of Smith, of Leighton, of Uſher, of Hopkins, of Baxter *(a)*, and of many others of ſcarcely

(a) I muſt beg leave to claſs among the brighteſt ornaments of the Church of England, this great man, who with his brethren

inferior note. In their pages the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity were every where viſible, and on the deep and ſolid baſis of theſe doctrinal truths were laid the foundations of a ſuperſtructure of morals proportionably broad and exalted. Of this fact their writings ſtill extant are a deciſive proof: and they who may want leiſure, or opportunity, or inclination, for the peruſal of theſe valuable records, may ſatisfy themſelves of the truth of the aſſertion, that, ſuch as we have ſtated it, was the Chriſtianity of thoſe times, by conſulting our Articles and Homilies, or even by carefully examining our excellent Liturgy. But from that tendency to deterioration lately noticed, theſe great fundamental truths began to be ſomewhat leſs prominent in the compoſitions of many of the leading divines before the time of the civil wars. During that period, however, the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity were grievouſly abuſed by many of the ſectaries, who were foremoſt in the commotions of thoſe unhappy days; who, while they talked copiouſly of the free grace of Chriſt, and the operations of the Holy Spirit, were by their lives an open ſcandal to the name of Chriſtian *(a)*.

Towards

thren was ſo ſhamefully ejected from the church in 1666, in violation of the royal word, as well as of the clear principles of juſtice. With his controverſial pieces I am little acquainted: but his practical writings, in four maſſy folios, are a treaſury of Chriſtian wiſdom; and it would be a moſt valuable ſervice to mankind to reviſe them, and perhaps to abridge them, ſo as to render them more ſuited to the taſte of modern readers. This has been already done in the caſe of his Dying Thoughts, a beautiful little piece, and of his Saints' Reſt. His Life alſo, written by himſelf, and in a ſeparate volume, contains much uſeful matter, and many valuable particulars of the hiſtory of the times of Charles I. Cromwell, &c. &c.

(a) Let me by no means be underſtood to cenſure all the ſectaries without diſcrimination. Many of them, and ſome who

Towards the close of the last century, the divines of the established Church (whether it arose from the obscurity of their own views, or from a strong impression of former abuses, and of the evils which had resulted from them) began to run into a different error. They professed to make it their chief object to inculcate the moral and practical precepts of Christianity, which they conceived to have been before too much neglected; but without sufficiently maintaining, often even without justly laying the grand foundation, of a sinner's acceptance with God; or pointing out how the practical precepts of Christianity grow out of her peculiar doctrines, and are inseparably connected with them *(a)*. By

who by the unhappy circumstances of the times became objects of notice in a political view, were men of great erudition, deep views of Religion, and unquestionable piety: and though the writings of the puritans are prolix, and according to the fashion of their age, rendered rather perplexed than clear by multiplied divisions and subdivisions; yet they are a mine of wealth, in which any one who will submit to some degree of labour will find himself well rewarded for his pains. In particular the writings of Dr. OWEN, Mr. HOWE, and Mr. FLAVELL, well deserve this character: of the first mentioned author, there are two pieces which I would especially recommend to the reader's perusal, one, on Heavenly Mindedness, abridged by Dr. MAYO; the other, on the Mortification of Sin in Believers. While I have been speaking in terms of such high, and, I trust, such just eulogium of many of the teachers of the Church of England; this may not be an improper place to express the high obligations which we owe to the Dissenters, for many excellent publications. Of this number are Dr. EVANS's Sermons on the Christian Temper; and that most useful book, the Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul, by Dr. DODDRIDGE; also, his Life, by ORTON, and Letters; and two volumes of Sermons, one on Regeneration, the other on the Power and Grace of Christ: May the writer be permitted to embrace this opportunity of recommending two volumes, published separately, of Sermons, by the late Dr. WITHERSPOON, President of the College of New Jersey.

(a) Vide Section vi. of the ivth Chapter, where we have expressly and fully treated of this most important truth.

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this fatal error, the very genius and eſſential nature of Chriſtianity imperceptibly underwent a change. She no longer retained her peculiar characters, or produced that appropriate frame of ſpirit by which her followers had been characterized. Facilis deſcenſus. The example thus ſet was followed during the preſent century, and its effect was aided by various cauſes already pointed out. In addition to theſe, it may be proper to mention as a cauſe of powerful operation; that for the laſt fifty years the preſs has teemed with moral eſſays, many of them publiſhed periodically, and moſt extenſively circulated; which, being conſidered either as works of mere entertainment, or, in which at leaſt entertainment was to be blended with inſtruction, rather than as religious pieces, were kept free from whatever might give them the air of ſermons, or cauſe them to wear an appearance of ſerioufneſs, inconſiſtent with the idea of relaxation. But in this way the fatal habit, of conſidering Chriſtian morals as diſtinct from Chriſtian doctrines, inſenſibly gained ſtrength. Thus the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity went more and more out of ſight; and, as might naturally have been expected, the moral ſyſtem itſelf alſo began to wither and decay, being robbed of that which ſhould have ſupplied it with life and nutriment. At length, in our own days, theſe peculiar doctrines have almoſt altogether vaniſhed from the view. Even in many ſermons, as we have formerly noticed, ſcarcely any traces of them are to be found.

But the degree of neglect into which they are really fallen, may perhaps be rendered ſtill more manifeſt by appealing to another criterion. There is a certain claſs of publications, of which

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it is the object to give us exact delineations of life and manners: and when these are written by authors of accurate observation and deep knowledge of human nature; (and many such there have been in our times) they furnish a more faithful picture, than can be obtained in any other way, of the prevalent opinions and feelings of mankind. It must be obvious that novels are here alluded to. A careful perusal of the most celebrated of these pieces would furnish a strong confirmation of the apprehension, suggested from other considerations, concerning the very low state of Religion in this country; but they would still more strikingly illustrate the truth of the remark, that the grand peculiarities of Christianity are almost vanished from the view. In a sermon, although throughout the whole of it there may have been no traces of these peculiarities, either directly or indirectly, the preacher closes with an ordinary form; which, if one were to assert that they were absolutely omitted, would immediately be alledged in contradiction of the assertion, and may just serve to protect them from falling into entire oblivion. But in novels, the writer is not so tied down. In these, people of Religion, and clergymen too, are placed in all possible situations, and the sentiments and language deemed suitable to the occasion are assigned to them. They are introduced instructing, reproving, counselling, comforting. It is often the author's intention to represent them in a favourable point of view, and accordingly he makes them as well informed and as good Christians as he knows how. They are painted amiable, benevolent, and forgiving; but it is not too much to say, that if all the peculiarities of Christianity had never

never exiſted, or had been proved to be falſe, the circumſtance would ſcarcely create the neceſſity of altering a ſingle ſyllable in any of the moſt celebrated of theſe performances. It is ſtriking to obſerve the difference which there is in this reſpect in ſimilar works of Mahometan authors, wherein the characters, which they mean to repreſent in a favourable light, are drawn vaſtly more obſervant of the peculiarities of their religion *(a)*.

But to make an end of this diſcuſſion, concerning the degree in which the peculiarities of Chriſtianity have fallen into neglect, and concerning one of the principal of the cauſes which have produced it: if this be the ſtate of things even in the caſe of ſermons, and of the compoſitions of thoſe, whoſe ſphere of information muſt be ſuppoſed larger than that of the bulk of mankind; it muſt excite leſs wonder, that in the world in general, though Chriſtianity be not formally denied, people know little about it; and that in fact you find, when you come to converſe with them, that, admitting in terms the Divine Revelation of Scripture, they are far from believing the propoſitions which it contains.

It has alſo been a melancholy prognoſtic of the ſtate to which we are progreſſive, that many of the moſt eminent of the literati of modern times have been profeſſed unbelievers: and that others of them have diſcovered ſuch lukewarmneſs in the cauſe of Chriſt, as to treat with eſpecial good will, and attention, and reſpect, thoſe men, who, by their avowed publications, were

(a) No exceptions have fallen within my own reading, but the writings of RICHARDSON.

openly

openly aſſailing, or inſidiouſly undermining the very foundations of the Chriſtian hope; conſidering themſelves as more cloſely united to them by literature, than ſevered from them by the wideſt religious differences *(a)*. Can it then occaſion ſurpriſe, that under all theſe circumſtances, one of the moſt acute and moſt forward of the profeſſed unbelievers *(b)* ſhould appear to anticipate, as at no great diſtance, the more complete triumph of his ſceptical principles; and that another author of diſtinguiſhed name *(c)*, not ſo openly profeſſing thoſe infidel opinions, ſhould declare of the writer above alluded to, whoſe great abilities had been ſyſtematically proſtituted to the open attack of every principle of Religion, both natural and revealed, "that

(a) It is with pain that the author finds himſelf compelled to place ſo great a writer as Dr. ROBERTSON in this claſs. But, to ſay nothing of his phlegmatic account of the reformation; a ſubject which we ſhould have thought likely to excite in any one, who united the character of a Chriſtian Divine with that of an Hiſtorian, ſome warmth of pious gratitude for the good providence of God; to paſs over alſo the ambiguity, in which he leaves his readers as to his opinion of the authenticity of the Moſaic chronology, in his diſquiſitions on the trade of India; his letters to Mr. GIBBON, lately publiſhed, cannot but excite emotions of regret and ſhame in every ſincere Chriſtian. The author hopes, that he has ſo far explained his ſentiments as to render it almoſt unneceſſary to remark, what, however, to prevent miſconſtruction, he muſt here declare, that ſo far from approving, he muſt be underſtood decidedly to condemn, a hot, a contentious, much more an abuſive manner of oppoſing or of ſpeaking of the aſſailants of Chriſtianity. The Apoſtle's direction in this reſpect cannot be too much attended to. "The "ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive; but be gentle unto all "men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe "that oppoſe themſelves; if God peradventure will give them "repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." (2 Timothy, ii. 24, 25.)

(b) Mr. HUME.

(c) Vide Dr. A. Smith's Letter to W. Strahan, Eſq.

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" he had always conſidered him, both in his " life-time and ſince his death, as approaching " as nearly to the idea of a perfectly wiſe and " virtuous man, as perhaps the nature of human " frailty will permit ?"

Can there then be a doubt, whither tends the path in which we are travelling, and whither at length it muſt conduct us ? If any ſhould heſitate, let them take a leſſon from experience. In a neighbouring country, ſeveral of the ſame cauſes have been in action ; and they have at length produced their full effect. Manners corrupted, morals depraved, diſſipation predominant, above all, Religion diſcredited, and infidelity grown into repute and faſhion *(a)*, terminated in the public diſavowal of every religious principle, which had been uſed to attract the veneration of mankind. The repreſentatives of a whole nation publicly witneſſing, not only without horror, but, to ſay the leaſt, without diſapprobation, an open unqualified denial of the very exiſtence of God ; and at length, as a body, withdrawing their allegiance from the Majeſty of Heaven.

There are not a few, perhaps, who may have witneſſed with apprehenſion, and may be ready to confeſs with pain, the gradual declenſion of Religion ; but who at the ſame time may conceive that the writer of this tract is diſpoſed to carry things too far. They may even allege, that the degree of Religion for which he contends is inconſiſtent with the ordinary buſineſs of

(a) What is here ſtated muſt be acknowledged by all, be their political opinions concerning French events what they may ; and it makes no difference in the writer's view of the ſubject, whether the ſtate of morals was or was not, quite, or nearly, as bad, before the French revolution.

life,

life, and with the well-being of ſociety; that if it were generally to prevail, people would be wholly engroſſed by Religion, and all their time occupied by prayer and preaching. Men not being ſufficiently intereſted in the purſuit of temporal objects, agriculture and commerce would decline, the arts would languiſh, the very duties of common life would be neglected; and, in ſhort, the whole machine of civil ſociety would be obſtructed, and ſpeedily ſtopped. An opening for this charge is given by an ingenious writer *(a)* alluded to in an early period of our work; and is even ſomewhat countenanced by an author ſince referred to, from whom ſuch a ſentiment juſtly excites more ſurpriſe *(b)*.

In reply to this objection it might be urged, that though we ſhould allow it for a moment to be in a conſiderable degree well founded, yet this admiſſion would not warrant the concluſion intended to be drawn from it. The queſtion would ſtill remain, whether our repreſentation of what Chriſtianity requires be agreeable to the word of God? For if it be, ſurely it muſt be confeſſed to be a matter of ſmall account to ſacrifice a little worldly comfort and proſperity, during the ſhort ſpan of our exiſtence in this life, in order to ſecure a crown of eternal glory, and the enjoyment of thoſe pleaſures which are at God's right hand for evermore! It might be added alſo, that our bleſſed Saviour had fairly declared, that it would often be required of Chriſtians to make ſuch a ſacrifice; and had forewarned us, that, in order to be able to do it with cheerfulneſs whenever the occaſion ſhould arrive, we muſt habitually ſit looſe to all worldly

(a) Soame Jenyns. *(b)* Paley's Evidence.

poſſeſſions

poſſeſſions and enjoyments. And it might farther be remarked, that though it were even admitted, that the *general prevalence of vital Chriſtianity* ſhould ſomewhat interfere with the views of national wealth and aggrandiſement; yet that there is too much reaſon to believe that, do all we can, this general prevalence needs not to be apprehended, or, to ſpeak more juſtly, could not be hoped for. But indeed the objection on which we have now been commenting, is not only groundleſs, but the very contrary to it is the truth. If Chriſtianity, ſuch as we have repreſented it, were generally to prevail; the world, from being ſuch as it is, would become a ſcene of general peace and proſperity; and abating the chances and calamities "which fleſh is "inſeparably heir to," would wear one unwearied face of complacency and joy.

On the firſt promulgation of Chriſtianity, it is true, ſome of her early converts ſeem to have been in danger of ſo far miſtaking the genius of the new Religion, as to imagine that in future they were to be diſcharged from an active attendance on their ſecular affairs. But the Apoſtle moſt pointedly guarded them againſt ſo groſs an error, and expreſsly and repeatedly enjoined them to perform the particular duties of their ſeveral ſtations with increaſed alacrity and fidelity, that they might thereby do credit to their Chriſtian profeſſion. This he did, at the ſame time that he preſcribed to them that predominant love of God and of Chriſt, that heavenly-mindedneſs, that comparative indifference to the things of this world, that earneſt endeavour after growth in grace and perfection in holineſs, which have already been ſtated as the eſſential characteriſtics of real Chriſtianity. It cannot therefore

therefore be ſuppoſed by any who allow to the Apoſtle even the claim of a conſiſtent inſtructor, much leſs by any who admit his Divine authority, that theſe latter precepts are incompatible with the former. Let it be remembered, that the grand characteriſtic mark of the true Chriſtian, which has been inſiſted on, is *his deſiring to pleaſe God in all his thoughts, and words, and actions; to take the revealed word to be the rule of his belief and practice; to "let his light ſhine before men;" and in all things to adorn the doctrine which he profeſſes.* No calling is proſcribed, no purſuit is forbidden, no ſcience or art, no pleaſure is diſallowed, which is reconcilable with this principle. It muſt indeed be confeſſed that Chriſtianity would not favour that vehement and inordinate ardour in the purſuit of temporal objects, which tends to the acquiſition of immenſe wealth, or of widely ſpread renown: nor is it calculated to gratify the extravagant views of thoſe miſtaken politicians, the chief object of whoſe admiration, and the main ſcope of whoſe endeavours for their country, are, extended dominion, and commanding power, and unrivalled affluence, rather than thoſe more ſolid advantages of peace, and comfort, and ſecurity. Theſe men would barter comfort for greatneſs. In their vain reveries they forget that a nation conſiſts of individuals, and that true national proſperity is no other than the multiplication of particular happineſs.

But in fact, ſo far is it from being true that the prevalence of *real* Religion would produce a ſtagnation in life; that a man, whatever might be his employment or purſuit, would be furniſhed with a new motive to proſecute it with alacrity, a motive far more conſtant and vigorous than any human proſpects can ſupply: at the

ſame

ſame time, his ſolicitude being not ſo much to ſucceed in whatever he might be engaged in, as to act from a pure principle and leave the event to God; he would not be liable to the ſame diſappointments, as men who are active and laborious from a deſire of worldly gain or of human eſtimation. Thus he would poſſeſs the true ſecret of a life at the ſame time uſeful and happy. Following peace alſo with all men, and looking upon them as members of the ſame family, entitled not only to the debts of juſtice, but to the leſs definite and more liberal claims of fraternal kindneſs; he would naturally be reſpected and beloved by others, and be in himſelf free from the annoyance of thoſe bad paſſions, by which they who are actuated by worldly principles are ſo commonly corroded. If any country were indeed filled with men, each thus diligently diſcharging the duties of his own ſtation without breaking in upon the rights of others, but on the contrary endeavouring, ſo far as he might be able, to forward their views and promote their happineſs; all would be active and harmonious in the goodly frame of human ſociety. There would be no jarrings, no diſcord. The whole machine of civil life would work without obſtruction or diſorder, and the courſe of its movements would be like the harmony of the ſpheres.

Such would be the happy ſtate of a truly Chriſtian nation within itſelf. Nor would its condition with regard to foreign countries form a contraſt to this its internal comfort. Such a community, on the contrary, peaceful at home, would be reſpected and beloved abroad. General integrity in all its dealings would inſpire univerſal confidence: differences between nations commonly

commonly ariſe from mutual injuries, and ſtill more from mutual jealouſy and diſtruſt. Of the former there would be no longer any ground for complaint; the latter would find nothing to attach upon. But if, in ſpite of all its juſtice and forbearance, the violence of ſome neighbouring ſtate ſhould force it to reſiſt an unprovoked attack, (for hoſtilities ſtrictly defenſive are thoſe only in which it would be engaged) its domeſtic union would double its national force; while the conſciouſneſs of a good cauſe, and of the general favour of Heaven, would invigorate its arm, and inſpirit its efforts.

It is indeed the poſition of an author, to whom we have had frequent occaſion to refer, and whoſe love of paradox has not ſeldom led him into error, that true Chriſtianity is an enemy to patriotiſm. If by patriotiſm be meant that miſchievous and domineering quality, which renders men ardent to promote, not the happineſs, but the aggrandiſement of their own country, by the oppreſſion and conqueſt of every other; to ſuch patriotiſm, ſo generally applauded in the Heathen world, that Religion muſt be indeed an enemy, whoſe foundation is juſtice, and whoſe compendious character is "peace,—"and good will towards men." But if by patriotiſm be underſtood that quality which, without ſhutting up our philanthropy within the narrow bounds of a ſingle kingdom, yet attaches us in particular to the country to which we belong; of this true patriotiſm, Chriſtianity is the moſt copious ſource, and the ſureſt preſervative. The contrary opinion can indeed only have ariſen from not conſidering the fulneſs and univerſality of our Saviour's precepts. Not like the puny productions of human workmanſhip, which at the

the beſt can commonly ſerve but the particular purpoſe that they are ſpecially deſigned to anſwer; the moral, as well as the phyſical, principles of the great Author of all things are capable of being applied at once to ten thouſand different uſes; thus, amidſt infinite complication, preſerving a grand ſimplicity, and therein bearing the unambiguous ſtamp of their Divine Original. Thus, to ſpecify one out of the numberleſs inſtances which might be adduced; the principle of gravitation, while it is ſubſervient to all the mechanical purpoſes of common life, keeps at the ſame time the ſtars in their courſes, and ſuſtains the harmony of worlds.

Thus alſo in the caſe before us: ſociety conſiſts of a number of different circles of various magnitudes and uſes; and that circumſtance, wherein the principle of patriotiſm chiefly conſiſts, whereby the duty of patriotiſm is beſt practiſed, and the happieſt effects to the general weal produced, is, that it ſhould be the deſire and aim of every individual to fill well his own proper circle, as a part and member of the whole, with a view to the production of general happineſs. This our Saviour enjoined when he preſcribed the duty of univerſal love, which is but another term for the moſt exalted patriotiſm. Benevolence, indeed, when not originating from Religion, diſpenſes but from a ſcanty and precarious fund; and therefore, if it be liberal in the caſe of ſome objects, it is generally found to be contracted towards others. Men who, acting from worldly principles, make the greateſt ſtir about general philanthropy or zealous patriotiſm, are often very deficient in their conduct in domeſtic life; and very neglectful of the opportunities, fully within their reach, of promoting

promoting the comfort of thoſe with whom they are immediately connected. But true Chriſtian benevolence is always occupied in producing happineſs to the utmoſt of its power, and according to the extent of its ſphere, be it larger or more limited; it contracts itſelf to the meaſure of the ſmalleſt; it can expand itſelf to the amplitude of the largeſt. It reſembles majeſtic rivers, which are poured from an unfailing and abundant ſource. Silent and peaceful in their outſet, they begin with diſpenſing beauty and comfort to every cottage by which they paſs. In their further progreſs they fertilize provinces and enrich kingdoms. At length they pour themſelves into the ocean; where, changing their names but not their nature, they viſit diſtant nations and other hemiſpheres, and ſpread throughout the world the expanſive tide of their beneficence.

It muſt be confeſſed, that many of the good effects, of which Religion is productive to political ſocieties, would be produced even by a falſe Religion, which ſhould preſcribe good morals, and ſhould be able to enforce its precepts by ſufficient ſanctions. Of this nature are thoſe effects, which depend on our calling in the aid of a Being who ſees the heart, in order to aſſiſt the weakneſs, and in various ways to ſupply the inherent defects of all human juriſprudence. But the ſuperior excellence of Chriſtianity in this reſpect muſt be acknowledged, both in the ſuperiority of her moral code, and in the powerful motives and efficacious means which ſhe furniſhes for enabling us to practiſe it; and in the tendency of her doctrines to provide for the obſervance of her precepts, by producing tempers of mind which correſpond with them.

But,

But, more than all this; it has not perhaps been enough remarked, that true Chriſtianity, from her eſſential nature, appears peculiarly and powerfully adapted to promote the preſervation and healthfulneſs of political communities. What is in truth their grand malady? The anſwer is ſhort; Selfiſhneſs. This is that young diſeaſe received at the moment of their birth, "which grows with their growth, and ſtrengthens with their ſtrength;" and through which they at length expire, if not cut off prematurely by ſome external ſhock or inteſtine convulſion.

The diſeaſe of ſelfiſhneſs, indeed, aſſumes different forms in the different claſſes of ſociety. In the great and the wealthy, it diſplays itſelf in luxury, in pomp and parade; and in all the frivolities of a fickly and depraved imagination, which ſeeks in vain its own gratification, and is dead to the generous and energetic purſuits of an enlarged heart. In the lower orders, when not motionleſs under the weight of a ſuperincumbent deſpotiſm, it manifeſts itſelf in pride, and its natural offspring, inſubordination in all its modes. But though the external effects may vary, the internal principle is the ſame; a diſpoſition in each individual to make ſelf the grand center and end of his deſires and enjoyments; to over-rate his own merits and importance, and of courſe to magnify his claims on others, and in return to under-rate their's on him; a diſpoſition to under-value the advantages, and over-ſtate the diſadvantages, of his condition in life. Thence ſpring rapacity and venality, and ſenſuality. Thence imperious nobles, and factious leaders; and an unruly commonalty, bearing with difficulty the inconveniences of a lower ſtation, and imputing to the

nature

nature or adminiſtration of their government the evils which neceſſarily flow from the very conſtitution of our ſpecies, or which perhaps are chiefly the reſult of their own vices and follies. The oppoſite to ſelfiſhneſs is public ſpirit; which may be termed, not unjuſtly, the grand principle of political vitality, the very *life's breath* of ſtates, which tends to keep them active and vigorous, and to carry them to greatneſs and glory.

The tendency of public ſpirit, and the oppoſite tendency of ſelfiſhneſs, have not eſcaped the obſervation of the founders of ſtates, or of the writers on government; and various expedients have been reſorted to and extolled, for cheriſhing the one, and for repreſſing the other. Sometimes a principle of internal agitation and diſſenſion, reſulting from the very frame of the government, has been productive of the effect. Sparta flouriſhed for more than ſeven hundred years under the civil inſtitutions of Lycurgus; which guarded againſt the ſelfiſh principle, by prohibiting commerce, and impoſing univerſal poverty and hardſhip. The Roman commonwealth, in which public ſpirit was cheriſhed, and ſelfiſhneſs checked, by the principle of the love of glory, was alſo of long continuance. This paſſion naturally operates to produce an unbounded ſpirit of conqueſt, which, like the ambition of the greateſt of its own heroes, was never ſatiated while any other kingdom was left it to ſubdue. The principle of political vitality, when kept alive only by means like theſe, merits the deſcription once given of eloquence: "Sicut flamma, materia alitur, & motibus ex-"citatur, & urendo clareſcit." But like eloquence, when no longer called into action by

external cauſes, or fomented by civil broils, it gradually languiſhes. Wealth and luxury produce ſtagnation, and ſtagnation terminates in death.

To provide, however, for the continuance of a ſtate, by the admiſſion of internal diſſenſions, or even by the chilling influence of poverty, ſeems to be in ſome ſort ſacrificing the end to the means. Happineſs is the end for which men unite in civil ſociety; but in ſocieties thus conſtituted, little happineſs, comparatively ſpeaking, is to be found. The expedient, again, of preſerving a ſtate by the ſpirit of conqueſt, though even this has not wanted its admirers *(a)*, is not to be tolerated for a moment, when conſidered on principles of univerſal juſtice. Such a ſtate lives, and grows, and thrives, by the miſery of others, and becomes profeſſedly the general enemy of its neighbours, and the ſcourge of the human race. All theſe devices are in truth but too much like the fabrications of man, when compared with the works of the Supreme Being; clumſy, yet weak in the execution of their purpoſe, and full of contradictory principles and jarring movements.

I might here enlarge with pleaſure on the unrivalled excellence, in this very view, of the conſtitution under which we live in this happy country; and point out how, more perhaps than any which ever exiſted upon earth, it is ſo framed, as to provide at the ſame time for keeping up a due degree of public ſpirit, and

(a) See eſpecially that great hiſtorian, FERGUSON, who, in his Eſſay on Civil Society, endeavours to vindicate the cauſe of heroiſm from the cenſure conveyed by the poet:

"From Macedonia's madman to the Swede."

yet

yet for preſerving unimpaired the quietneſs, and comfort, and charities of private life; how it even extracts from ſelfiſhneſs itſelf many of the advantages which, under leſs happily conſtructed forms of government, public ſpirit only can ſupply. But ſuch a political diſcuſſion, however grateful to a Britiſh mind, would here be out of place. It is rather our buſineſs to remark, how much Chriſtianity in every way ſets herſelf in direct hoſtility to ſelfiſhneſs, the mortal diſtemper of political communities; and conſequently, how their welfare muſt be inſeparable from her prevalence. It might indeed, be almoſt ſtated as the main object and chief concern of Chriſtianity, to root out our natural ſelfiſhneſs, and to rectify the falſe ſtandard which it impoſes on us; with views, however, far higher than any which concern merely our temporal and ſocial well-being; to bring us to a juſt eſtimate of ourſelves, and of all around us, and to a due impreſſion of the various claims and obligations reſulting from the different relations in which we ſtand. Benevolence, enlarged, vigorous, operative benevolence, is her maſter principle. Moderation in temporal purſuits and enjoyments, comparative indifference to the iſſue of worldly projects, diligence in the diſcharge of perſonal and civil duties, reſignation to the will of God, and patience under all the diſpenſations of his Providence, are among her daily leſſons. Humility is one of the eſſential qualities, which her precepts moſt directly and ſtrongly enjoin, and which all her various doctrines tend to call forth and cultivate; and humility, as has been before ſuggeſted, lays the deepeſt and ſureſt grounds for benevolence. In whatever claſs or order of ſociety Chriſtianity prevails,

ſhe ſets herſelf to rectify the particular faults, or, if we would ſpeak more diſtinctly, to counteract the particular mode of ſelfiſhneſs, to which that claſs is liable. Affluence ſhe teaches to be liberal and beneficent; authority, to bear its faculties with meekneſs, and to conſider the various cares and obligations belonging to its elevated ſtation, as being conditions on which that ſtation is conferred. Thus, ſoftening the glare of wealth, and moderating the inſolence of power, ſhe renders the inequalities of the ſocial ſtate leſs galling to the lower orders, whom alſo ſhe inſtructs, in their turn, to be diligent, humble, patient: reminding them that their more lowly path has been allotted to them by the hand of God; that it is their part faithfully to diſcharge its duties, and contentedly to bear its inconveniences; that the preſent ſtate of things is very ſhort; that the objects, about which worldly men conflict ſo eagerly, are not worth the conteſt; that the peace of mind, which Religion offers to all ranks indiſcriminately, affords more true ſatisfaction than all the expenſive pleaſures which are beyond the poor man's reach; that in this view, however, the poor have the advantage, and that if their ſuperiors enjoy more abundant comforts, they are alſo expoſed to many temptations from which the inferior claſſes are happily exempted; that "having, food and raiment, they ſhould be "therewith content," for that their ſituation in life, with all its evils, is better than they have deſerved at the hand of God; finally, that all human diſtinctions will ſoon be done away, and the true followers of Chriſt will all, as children of the ſame Father, be alike admitted to the poſſeſſion of the ſame heavenly inheritance.

Such

Such are the bleſſed effects of Chriſtianity on the temporal well-being of political communities.

But the Chriſtianity which can produce effects like theſe, muſt be real, not nominal, deep, not ſuperficial. Such then is the Religion we ſhould cultivate, if we would realize theſe pleaſing ſpeculations, and arreſt the progreſs of political decay. But in the preſent circumſtances of this country, it is a farther reaſon for endeavouring to cultivate this vital Chriſtianity, ſtill conſidering its effects merely in a political view, that, according to all human appearance, we muſt either have this or none: unleſs the prevalence of this be in ſome degree reſtored, we are likely, not only to loſe all the advantages which we might have derived from true Chriſtianity, but to incur all the manifold evils which would reſult from the abſence of all religion.

In the firſt place, let it be remarked, that a weakly principle of Religion, and even ſuch an one, in a political view, is productive of many advantages; though its exiſtence may be prolonged if all external circumſtances favour its continuance, can hardly be kept alive, when the ſtate of things is ſo unfavourable to vital Religion, as it muſt be confeſſed to be in our condition of ſociety. Nor is it merely the ordinary effects of a ſtate of wealth and proſperity to which we here allude. Much alſo may juſtly be apprehended, from that change which has taken place in our general habits of thinking and feeling, concerning the ſyſtems and opinions of former times. At a leſs advanced period of ſociety, indeed, the Religion of the ſtate will be generally accepted, though it be not felt in its vital power. It was the Religion of our fore-

forefathers: with the bulk it is on that account entitled to reverence, and its authority is admitted without queſtion. The eſtabliſhment in which it ſubſiſts pleads the ſame preſcription, and obtains the ſame reſpect. But in our days, things are very differently circumſtanced. Not merely the blind prejudice in favour of former times, but even the proper reſpect for them, and the reaſonable preſumption in their favour, has abated. Still leſs will the idea be endured, of any ſyſtem being kept up, when the impoſture is ſeen through by the higher orders, for the ſake of retaining the common people in ſubjection. A ſyſtem, if not ſupported by a real perſuaſion of its truth, will fall to the ground. Thus it not unfrequently happens, that in a more advanced ſtate of ſociety, a religious eſtabliſhment muſt be indebted for its ſupport to that very Religion, which in earlier times it foſtered and protected; as the weakneſs of ſome aged mother is ſuſtained, and her exiſtence lengthened, by the tender aſſiduities of the child whom ſhe had reared in the helpleſſneſs of infancy. So in the preſent inſtance, unleſs there be reinfuſed into the maſs of our ſociety, ſomething of that principle, which animated our eccleſiaſtical ſyſtem in its earlier days, it is vain for us to hope that the eſtabliſhment will very long continue: for the anomaly will not much longer be borne, of an eſtabliſhment, the *actual* principles of the bulk of whoſe members, and even teachers, are ſo extremely different from thoſe which it profeſſes. But in proportion as vital Chriſtianity can be revived, in that ſame proportion the church eſtabliſhment is ſtrengthened; for the revival of vital Chriſtianity is the very reinfuſion of which we have been ſpeaking.

This

This is the very Chriſtianity on which our eſtabliſhment is founded; and that which her Articles, and Homilies, and Liturgy, teach throughout.

But if, when the reign of prejudice, and even of honeſt prepoſſeſſion, and of grateful veneration, is no more (for by theſe almoſt any ſyſtem may generally be ſupported, before a ſtate, having paſſed the period of its maturity, is verging to its decline); if there are any who think that a dry, unanimated Religion, like that which is now profeſſed by nominal Chriſtians, can hold its place; much more that it can be revived among the general maſs of mankind, it may be affirmed, that, arguing merely on human principles, they know little of human nature. The kind of Religion which we have recommended, whatever opinion may be entertained concerning its truth, and to ſay nothing of the agency of Divine Grace, muſt at leaſt be conceded to be the only one which is at all ſuited to make impreſſion upon the lower orders, by ſtrongly intereſting the paſſions of the human mind. If it be thought that a ſyſtem of ethics may regulate the conduct of the higher claſſes; ſuch an one is altogether unſuitable to the lower, who muſt be worked upon by their affections, or they will not be worked upon at all. The antients were wiſer than ourſelves, and never thought of governing the community in general by their leſſons of philoſophy. Theſe leſſons were confined to the ſchools of the learned; while for the million, a ſyſtem of Religion, ſuch as it was, was kept up, as alone adapted to their groſſer natures. If this reaſoning fail to convince, we may ſafely appeal to experience. Let the Socinian and the moral teacher of Chriſtianity come forth,

forth, and tell us what effects *they* have produced on the lower orders. They themſelves will hardly deny the inefficacy of their inſtructions. But, bleſſed be God, the Religion which we recommend, has proved its correſpondence with the character originally given of Chriſtianity, that it was calculated for the poor; by changing the whole condition of the maſs of ſociety in many of the moſt populous diſtricts in this and other countries; and by bringing them from being ſcenes of almoſt unexampled wickedneſs and barbariſm, to be eminent for ſobriety, decency, induſtry, and, in ſhort, for whatever can render men uſeful members of civil ſociety.

If indeed, through the bleſſing of Providence, a principle of true Religion ſhould in any conſiderable degree gain ground, there is no eſtimating the effects on public morals, and the conſequent influence on our political welfare. Theſe effects are not merely negative: though it would be much, merely to check the farther progreſs of a gangrene, which is eating out the very vital principles of our ſocial and political exiſtence. The general ſtandard of morality formerly deſcribed, would be raiſed, it would at leaſt be ſuſtained and kept for a while from farther depreſſion. The eſteem which religious characters would perſonally attract, would extend to the ſyſtem which they ſhould hold, and to the eſtabliſhment of which they ſhould be members. Theſe are all merely natural conſequences. But to thoſe who believe in a ſuperintending Providence, it may be added, that the bleſſing of God might be drawn down upon our country, and the ſtroke of his anger be for a while ſuſpended.

Let

Let us be ſpared the painful taſk of tracing, on the contrary, the fatal conſequences of the extinction of Religion among us. They are indeed ſuch as no man, who is ever ſo little intereſted for the welfare of his country, can contemplate without the deepeſt concern. The very loſs of our church eſtabliſhment, though, as in all human inſtitutions, ſome defects may be found in it, would in itſelf be attended with the moſt fatal conſequences. No prudent man dares haſtily pronounce how far its deſtruction might not greatly endanger our civil inſtitutions. It would not be difficult to prove, that the want of it would alſo be in the higheſt degree injurious to the cauſe of Chriſtianity; and ſtill more, that it would take away what appears from experience to be one of the moſt probable means of its revival. To what a degree might even the avowed principles of men, not altogether without Religion, decline, when our ineſtimable Liturgy ſhould no longer remain in uſe! a Liturgy juſtly ineſtimable, which continually ſets before us a faithful model of the Chriſtian's belief, and practice, and language; reſtraining us, as far as reſtraint is poſſible, from exceſſive deviations; furniſhing us with abundant inſtruction when we would return into the right path; affording an advantageous ground of no little value, to ſuch inſtructors as ſtill adhere to the good old principles of the Church of England; in ſhort, daily ſhaming us, by preſerving a living repreſentation of the opinions and habits of better times, as ſome hiſtorical record, which reproaches a degenerate poſterity, by exhibiting the worthier deeds of their progenitors. In ſuch a ſtate of things, to what a depth public

morals might ſink, may be anticipated by thoſe who conſider what would then be the condition of ſociety; who reflect how bad principles and vicious conduct mutually aid each other's operation, and how, in particular, the former make ſure the ground which the latter may have gained; who remember, that in the lower orders, the ſyſtem of honour, and the reſponſibility of character, are wanting, which in the ſuperior claſſes, in ſome poor degree, ſupply the place of higher principles. It is well for the happineſs of mankind, that ſuch a community could not long ſubſiſt. The cement of ſociety being no more, the ſtate would ſoon be diſſolved into individuality.

Let it not be vainly imagined, that our ſtate of civilization muſt prevent the moral degeneracy here threatened. A neighbouring nation has lately furniſhed a lamentable proof, that ſuperior poliſh and refinement may well conſiſt with a very large meaſure of depravity. But to appeal to a ſtill more deciſive inſtance: it may be ſeen in the hiſtory of the latter years of the moſt celebrated of the Pagan nations, that the higheſt degrees of civilization and refinement are by no means inſeparable from the moſt ſhocking depravity of morals. The fact is certain, and the obvious inference with regard to ourſelves cannot be denied. The cauſe of this ſtrange phænomenon, (ſuch it really appears to our view) for which the natural corruption of man might hardly ſeem to account ſufficiently, has been explained by an inſpired writer. Speaking of the moſt poliſhed nations of antiquity, he obſerves; "Becauſe when they knew God, "they glorified him not as God, and were not

"*ſolicitous*

"*ſolicitous (a)* to retain him in their know-
"ledge, he gave them over to a reprobate
"mind." Let us then beware, and take warning from their example: let us not ſuffer our ſelf-love to beguile us: let us not vainly perſuade ourſelves, that although proſperity and wealth may have cauſed us to relax a little too much, in thoſe more ſerious duties which regard our Maker, yet that we ſhall ſtop where we are; or, at leaſt, that we can never ſink into the ſame ſtate of moral depravation. Doubtleſs we ſhould ſink as low, if God were to give us up alſo to our own imaginations. And what ground have we to think he will not? If we would reaſon juſtly, we ſhould not compare ourſelves with the ſtate of the Heathen world when at its worſt; but with its ſtate at that period, when, for its forgetfulneſs of God, and its ingratitude towards him, it was ſuffered to fall, till at length it reached that worſt, its ultimate point of depreſſion. The Heathens had only reaſon and natural conſcience to direct them: we enjoy, ſuperadded to theſe, the clear light of Goſpel revelation, and a diſtinct declaration of God's dealings with them, to be a leſſon for our inſtruction. How then can we but believe that if we, enjoying advantages ſo much ſuperior to their's, are alike forgetful of our kind Benefactor, we alſo ſhall be left to ourſelves? and if ſo left, what reaſon can be aſſigned why we ſhould not fall into the ſame enormities?

What then is to be done? The inquiry is of the firſt importance, and the general anſwer to

(a) Such ſeems to be the juſt rendering of the word which our Teſtament tranſlates, "did not like to retain God in "their knowledge."

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it is not difficult.—The cauſes and nature of the decay of Religion and morals among us ſufficiently indicate the courſe, which, on principles of ſound policy, it is in the higheſt degree expedient for us to purſue. The diſtemper of which, as a community, we are ſick, ſhould be conſidered rather as a moral than a political malady. How much has this been forgotten by the diſputants of modern times! and accordingly, how tranſient may be expected to be the good effects of the beſt of their publications! We ſhould endeavour to tread back our ſteps. Every effort ſhould be uſed to raiſe the depreſſed tone of public morals. This is a duty particularly incumbent on all who are in the higher walks of life; and it is impoſſible not to acknowledge the obligations, which in this reſpect we owe as a nation, to thoſe exalted characters, whom God in his undeſerved mercy to us, ſtill ſuffers to continue on the throne, and who ſet to their ſubjects a pattern of decency and moderation rarely ſeen in their elevated ſtation.

But every perſon of rank, and fortune, and abilities, ſhould endeavour in like manner to exhibit a ſimilar example, and recommend it to the imitation of the circle in which he moves. It has been the opinion of ſome well-meaning people, that by giving, as far as they poſſibly could with innocence, into the cuſtoms and practices of irreligious men, they might ſoften the prejudices too frequently taken up againſt Religion, of its being an auſtere gloomy ſervice; and thus ſecure a previous favourable impreſſion againſt any time, when they might have an opportunity of explaining or enforcing their ſentiments. This is always a queſtionable, and, it is to be feared, a dangerous policy.

Many

Many miſchievous conſequences neceſſarily reſulting from it might eaſily be enumerated. But it is a policy particularly unſuitable to our inconſiderate and diſſipated times, and to the lengths at which we are arrived. In theſe circumſtances, the moſt likely means of producing the *revulſion* which is required, muſt be boldly to proclaim the diſtinction between the adherents of "God and Baal." The expediency of this conduct in our preſent ſituation is confirmed by another conſideration, to which we have before had occaſion to refer. It is this—that when men are aware that ſomething of difficulty is to be effected, their ſpirits riſe to the level of the encounter; they make up their minds to bear hardſhips and brave dangers, and to perſevere in ſpite of fatigue and oppoſition: whereas in a matter which is regarded as of eaſy and ordinary operation, they are apt to ſlumber over their work, and to fail in what a ſmall effort might have been ſufficient to accompliſh, for want of having called up the requiſite degree of energy and ſpirit. Conformably to the principle which is hereby ſuggeſted, in the circumſtances in which we are placed, the line of demarcation between the friends and the enemies of Religion ſhould now be made clear; the ſeparation ſhould be broad and obvious. Let him then, who wiſhes well to his country, no longer heſitate what courſe of conduct to purſue. The queſtion now is not, in what liberties he might warrantably indulge himſelf in another ſituation? but what are the reſtraints on himſelf which the exigencies of the preſent times render it adviſeable for him to impoſe? Circumſtanced as we now are, it is more than ever obvious, that *the beſt man is the trueſt patriot.*

Nor

Nor is it only by their perſonal conduct, (though this mode will always be the moſt efficacious) that men of authority and influence may promote the cauſe of good morals. Let them in their ſeveral ſtations encourage virtue and diſcountenance vice in others. Let them enforce the laws by which the wiſdom of our forefathers has guarded againſt the groſſer infractions of morals; and congratulate themſelves, that in a leading ſituation on the bench of juſtice there is placed a man who, to his honour be it ſpoken, is well diſpoſed to aſſiſt their efforts *(a)*. Let them favour and take part in any plans which may be formed for the advancement of morality. Above all things, let them endeavour to inſtruct and improve the riſing generation; that, if it be poſſible, an antidote may be provided for the malignity of that venom, which is ſtoring up in a neighbouring country. This has long been to my mind the moſt formidable feature of the preſent ſtate of things in France; where, it is to be feared, a brood of moral vipers, as it were, is now hatching, which, when they ſhall have attained to their miſchievous maturity, will go forth to poiſon the world. But fruitleſs will be all attempts to ſuſtain, much more to revive, the fainting cauſe of morals, unleſs you can in ſome degree reſtore the prevalence of Evangelical Chriſtianity. It is in morals as in phyſics; unleſs the ſource of practical principles be elevated, it will be in vain to attempt to make them flow on a high level in their future courſe. You may force them for a

(a) It is a gratification to the writer's perſonal, as well as public feelings, to pay this tribute of reſpect to the character of Lord Chief Juſtice KENYON.

while

while into ſome conſtrained poſition, but they will ſoon drop to their natural point of depreſſion. By all, therefore, who are ſtudious of their country's welfare, more particularly by all who deſire to ſupport our eccleſiaſtical eſtabliſhment, every effort ſhould be uſed to revive the Chriſtianity of our better days. The attempt ſhould eſpecially be made in the caſe of the paſtors of the Church, whoſe ſituation muſt render the principles which they hold a matter of ſupereminent importance. Wherever theſe teachers have ſteadily and zealouſly inculcated the true doctrines of the Church of England, the happieſt effects have commonly rewarded their labours. And it is worth obſerving, in the view which we are now taking, that theſe men, as might naturally be expected, are, perhaps without exception, friendly to our eccleſiaſtical and civil eſtabliſhments *(a)*; and conſequently, that their inſtructions and influence tend *directly*, as well as *indirectly*, to the maintenance of the cauſe of order and good government. Nor ſhould it be forgotten by any who, judging with the abſtract coldneſs of mere politicians, might doubt whether, by adopting the meaſures here recommended, a religious warmth would not be called into action, which might break out into miſchievous irregularities; that experience proves that an eſtabliſhment affords, from its very nature, the happy means of exciting a conſiderable degree of fervour and animation, and at the ſame time of reſtraining them within due bounds. The duty of encouraging vital Religion in the Church particularly devolves on all

(a) This is not thrown out raſhly, but aſſerted on the writer's own knowledge.

who

who have the diſpoſal of eccleſiaſtical preferment, and more eſpecially on the dignitaries of the ſacred order. Some of theſe have already ſounded the alarm; juſtly cenſuring the practice of ſuffering Chriſtianity to degenerate into a mere ſyſtem of ethics, and recommending more attention to the peculiar doctrines of our Religion. In our ſchools, in our univerſities, let the ſtudy be encouraged of the writings of thoſe venerable divines, who flouriſhed in the purer times of Chriſtianity. Let even a conſiderable proficiency in their writings be required of candidates for ordination. Let our churches no longer witneſs that unſeemly diſcordance, which has too much prevailed, between the prayers which precede, and the ſermon which follows.

But it may be enough to have briefly hinted at the courſe of conduct, which, in the preſent circumſtances of this country, motives merely political ſhould prompt us to purſue. To all who have at heart the national welfare, the above ſuggeſtions are ſolemnly ſubmitted. They have not been urged altogether without miſgivings, leſt it ſhould appear, as though the concern of Eternity were melted down into a mere matter of temporal advantage, or political expediency. But ſince it has graciouſly pleaſed the Supreme Being ſo to arrange the conſtitution of things, as to render the prevalence of true Religion and of pure morality conducive to the well-being of ſtates, and the preſervation of civil order; and ſince theſe ſubordinate inducements are not unfrequently held forth, even by the ſacred writers; it ſeemed not improper, and ſcarcely liable to miſconſtruction, to ſuggeſt inferior motives to readers, who might be leſs diſ-

poſed

poſed to liſten to conſiderations of a higher order.

Would to God that the courſe of conduct here ſuggeſted might be fairly purſued! Would to God that the happy conſequences, which would reſult from the principles we have recommended, could be realized; and above all, that the influence of true Religion could be extenſively diffuſed! It is the beſt wiſh which can be formed for his country, by one who is deeply anxious for its welfare:—

Lucem redde tuam, dux bone, patriæ!
Inſtar veris enim vultus ubi tuus
Affulſit populo, gratior it dies,
Et ſoles melius nitent.

CHAPTER VII.

Practical Hints to various Deſcriptions of Perſons.

THUS have we endeavoured to trace the chief defects of the religious ſyſtem of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians in this country. We have pointed out their low idea of the importance of Chriſtianity in general; their inadequate conceptions of all its leading doctrines, and the effect hereby naturally produced in relaxing the ſtrictneſs of its practical ſyſtem; more than all, we have remarked their grand fundamental miſconception of its genius and eſſential nature. Let not therefore the difference between them and true believers be conſidered as a minute difference; as a queſtion of forms or opinions. The queſtion is of the very ſubſtance of Religion;

gion; the difference is of the moſt ſerious and momentous amount. We muſt ſpeak out. *Their Chriſtianity is not Chriſtianity.* It wants the radical principle. It is mainly defective in all the grand conſtituents. Let them no longer then be deceived by names in a matter of infinite importance: but with humble prayer to the Source of all wiſdom, that he would enlighten their underſtandings, and clear their hearts from prejudice; let them ſeriouſly examine by the Scripture ſtandard their real belief and allowed practice, and they will become ſenſible of the ſhallowneſs of their ſcanty ſyſtem.

If through the bleſſing of Providence on any thing which may have been here written, there ſhould be any whom it has diſpoſed to this important duty of ſelf-inquiry; let me previouſly warn them to be well aware of our natural proneneſs to think too favourably of ourſelves. Selfiſhneſs is one of the principal fruits of the corruption of human nature; and it is obvious that ſelfiſhneſs diſpoſes us to over-rate our good qualities, and to overlook or extenuate our defects. The corruption of human nature therefore being admitted, it follows undeniably, that in all our reckonings, if we would form a juſt eſtimate of our character, we muſt make an allowance for the effects of ſelfiſhneſs. It is alſo another effect of the corruption of human nature, to cloud our moral ſight, and blunt our moral ſenſibility. Something muſt therefore be allowed for this effect likewiſe. Doubtleſs, the perfect purity of the Supreme Being makes him ſee in us ſtains, far more in number and deeper in dye, than we ourſelves can diſcover. Nor ſhould another awful conſideration be forgotten. When we look into ourſelves, thoſe ſins only, into

into which we have lately fallen, are commonly apt to excite any lively impreſſion. Many individual acts of vice, or a continued courſe of vicious or diſſipated conduct, which, when recent, may have ſmitten us with deep remorſe, after a few months or years leave but very faint traces in our recollection; at leaſt, thoſe acts alone continue to ſtrike us ſtrongly, which were of very extraordinary magnitude. But the ſtrong impreſſions which they at firſt excited, not the faded images which they ſubſequently preſent to us, furniſh the true meaſure of their guilt: and to the pure eyes of God, this guilt muſt always have appeared far greater than to us. Now to the Supreme Being we muſt believe that there is no paſt or future; as whatever *will be*, ſo whatever *has been*, is retained by him in preſent and unvarying contemplation, continuing always to appear juſt the ſame as at the firſt moment of its happening. Well may it then humble us in the ſight of that Being "who is of purer eyes than "to behold iniquity;" to call to mind that, unleſs our offences have been blotted out by our obtaining an intereſt in the ſatisfaction of Chriſt, through true repentance and lively faith, we appear before him clothed with the ſins of our whole lives, in all their original depth of colouring, and with all the aggravations which we no longer particularly remember, but which, in general, we, perhaps, may recollect to have once filled us with ſhame and confuſion of face. The writer is the rather deſirous of enforcing this reflection; becauſe he can truly declare, that he has found no conſideration ſo efficacious in producing in his own mind the deepeſt ſelf-abaſement.

In

In treating of the ſources of the erroneous eſtimates which we form of our religious and moral character, it may not, perhaps, be without its uſes to take this occaſion of pointing out ſome other common ſprings of ſelf-deception. Many perſons, as was formerly hinted, are miſled by the favourable opinions entertained of them by others; many, it is to be feared, miſtake a hot zeal for orthodoxy, for a cordial acceptance of the great truths of the Goſpel; and almoſt all of us, at one time or other, are more or leſs miſled by confounding the ſuggeſtions of the underſtanding with the impulſes of the will, the aſſent which our judgment gives to religious and moral truths, with a hearty belief and approbation of them.

There is another frequent ſource of ſelf-deception, which is productive of ſo much miſchief in life, that, though it may appear to lead to ſome degree of repetition, it would be highly improper to omit the mention of it in this place. That we may be the better underſtood, it may be proper to premiſe, that certain particular vices, and likewiſe that certain particular good and amiable qualities, ſeem naturally to belong to certain particular periods and conditions of life. Now, if we would reaſon fairly in eſtimating our moral character, we ought to examine ourſelves with reference to that particular "ſin "which does moſt eaſily beſet us," not to ſome other ſin to which we are not nearly ſo much liable. And in like manner, on the other hand, we ought not to account it matter of much ſelf-complacency, if we find in ourſelves that good and amiable quality which naturally belongs to our period or condition; but rather look for ſome leſs ambiguous ſign of a real internal

ternal principle of virtue. But we are very apt to reverſe theſe rules of judging: we are very apt, on the one hand, both in ourſelves and in others, to excuſe "the beſetting ſin," taking and giving credit for being exempt from others, to which we or they are leſs liable; and on the other hand, to value ourſelves extremely on our poſſeſſion of the good or amiable quality which naturally belongs to us, and to require no more ſatisfactory evidence of the *ſufficiency* at leaſt of our moral character. The bad effects of this partiality are aggravated by the practice, to which we are ſadly prone, of being contented, when we take a haſty view of ourſelves, with negative evidences of our ſtate; thinking it very well if we are not ſhocked by ſome great actual tranſgreſſion, inſtead of looking for the poſitive ſigns of a true Chriſtian, as laid down in the holy Scripture.

But the ſource of ſelf-deception, which it is more particularly our preſent object to point out, is a diſpoſition to conſider as a conqueſt of any particular vice, our merely forſaking it on our quitting the period or condition of life to which that vice belongs; when perhaps alſo we ſubſtitute for it the vice of the new period or condition on which we are entering. We thus miſtake our merely outgrowing our vices, or our relinquiſhing them from ſome change in our worldly circumſtances, for a thorough, or at leaſt for a ſufficient, reformation.

But this topic deſerves to be viewed a little more cloſely. Young people may, without much offence, be inconſiderate and diſſipated; the youth of one ſex may indulge occaſionally in licentious exceſſes; thoſe of the other may be ſupremely given up to vanity and pleaſure: yet,

yet, provided that they are ſweet tempered, and open, and not diſobedient to their parents or other ſuperiors, the former are deemed *good hearted* young men, the latter, *innocent* young women. Thoſe who love them beſt have no ſolicitude about their ſpiritual intereſts: and it would be deemed ſtrangely ſtrict in themſelves, or in others, to doubt of their becoming more religious as they advance in life; to ſpeak of them as being actually under the divine diſpleaſure; or, if their lives ſhould be in danger, to entertain any apprehenſions concerning their future deſtiny.

They grow older, and marry. The ſame licentiouſneſs, which was formerly conſidered in young men as a venial frailty, is now no longer regarded in the huſband and the father as compatible with the character of a decently religious man. The language is of this ſort; "they 'have ſown their wild oats, they muſt now re-"form, and be regular." Nor perhaps is the ſame manifeſt predominance of vanity and diſſipation deemed innocent in the matron: but if they are kind reſpectively in their conjugal and parental relations, and are tolerably regular and decent, they paſs for *mighty good ſort of people*; and it would be altogether unneceſſary ſcrupuloſity in them to doubt of their coming up to the requiſitions of the divine law, as far as in the preſent ſtate of the world can be expected from human frailty. Their hearts, however, are perhaps no more than before ſupremely ſet on the great work of their ſalvation, but are chiefly bent on increaſing their fortunes, or raiſing their families. Meanwhile they congratulate themſelves on their having amended from vices, which they are no longer ſtrongly tempted to commit,

commit, or their abſtaining from which ought not to be too confidently aſſumed as a teſt of the ſtrength of the religious principle, ſince the commiſſion of them would prejudice their characters, and perhaps injure their fortune in life.

Old age has at length made its advances. Now, if ever, we might expect that it would be deemed high time to make eternal things the *main* object of attention. No ſuch thing! There is ſtill an appropriate good quality, the preſence of which calms the diſquietude, and ſatisfies the requiſitions both of themſelves and of thoſe around them. It is now required of them that they ſhould be good natured and cheerful, indulgent to the frailties and follies of the young; remembering, that when young themſelves they gave into the ſame practices. How oppoſite this to that dread of ſin, which is the ſure characteriſtic of the true Chriſtian; which cauſes him to look back upon the vices of his own youthful days with ſhame and ſorrow; and which, inſtead of conceding to young people to be wild and thoughtleſs, as a privilege belonging to their age and circumſtances, prompts him to warn them againſt what had proved to himſelf matter of ſuch bitter retroſpection! Thus, throughout the whole of life, ſome means or other are deviſed for ſtifling the voice of conſcience. "We cry "peace while there is no peace;" and both to ourſelves and others that complacency is furniſhed, which ought only to proceed from a conſciouſneſs of being reconciled to God, and a humble hope of our poſſeſſing his favour.

I know that theſe ſentiments will be termed uncharitable; but I muſt not be deterred by ſuch an imputation. It is time to have done with

with that ſenſeleſs cant of charity, which inſults the underſtandings, and trifles with the feelings, of thoſe who are really concerned for the happineſs of their fellow-creatures. What matter of keen remorſe and of bitter ſelf-reproaches are they ſtoring up for their future torment, who are themſelves its miſerable dupes; or who, being charged with the office of watching over the eternal intereſts of their children or relations, ſuffer themſelves to be lulled aſleep, or beguiled by ſuch ſhallow reaſonings into ſparing themſelves the momentary pain of executing their important duty! Charity, indeed, is partial to the object of her regard; and where actions are of a doubtful quality, this partiality diſpoſes her to refer them to a good, rather than to a bad, motive. She is apt alſo ſomewhat to exaggerate merits, and to ſee amiable qualities in a light more favourable than that which ſtrictly belongs to them. But true charity is wakeful, fervent, full of ſolicitude, full of good offices, not ſo eaſily ſatisfied, not ſo ready to believe that every thing is going on well as a matter of courſe; but jealous of miſchief, apt to ſuſpect danger, and prompt to extend relief. Theſe are the ſymptoms by which genuine regard will manifeſt itſelf in a wife or a mother, in the caſe of the *bodily* health of the object of her affections. And where there is any real concern for the *ſpiritual* intereſts of others, it is characterized by the ſame infallible marks. That wretched quality, by which the ſacred name of charity is now ſo generally and ſo falſely uſurped, is no other than indifference; which, againſt the plaineſt evidence, or at leaſt where there is ſtrong ground of apprehenſion, is eaſily contented to believe that all goes well, becauſe

becauſe it has no anxieties to allay, no fears to repreſs. It undergoes no alternation of paſſions; it is not at one time fluſhed with hope, nor at another chilled by diſappointment.

To a conſiderate and feeling mind, there is ſomething deeply afflicting, in ſeeing the engaging cheerfulneſs and cloudleſs gaiety incident to youth, welcomed as a ſufficient indication of internal purity by the delighted parents; who, knowing the deceitfulneſs of theſe flattering appearances, ſhould eagerly avail themſelves of this period, when once waſted never to be regained, of good humoured acquieſcence and dutiful docility: a period when the ſoft and ductile temper of the mind renders it more eaſily ſuſceptible of the impreſſions we deſire; and when, therefore, habits ſhould be formed, which may aſſiſt our natural weakneſs to reſiſt the temptations to which we ſhall be expoſed in the commerce of maturer life. This is more eſpecially affecting in the female ſex, becauſe that ſex ſeems, by the very conſtitution of its nature, to be more favourably diſpoſed than ours to the feelings and offices of Religion; being thus fitted by the bounty of Providence, the better to execute the important taſk which devolves on it, of the education of our earlieſt youth. Doubtleſs, this more favourable diſpoſition to Religion in the female ſex, was graciouſly deſigned alſo to make women doubly valuable in the wedded ſtate: and it ſeems to afford to the married man the means of rendering an active ſhare in the buſineſs of life more compatible, than it would otherwiſe be, with the livelieſt devotional feelings; that when the huſband ſhould return to his family, worn and haraſſed by worldly cares or profeſſional labours, the wife, habitually pre-

ſerving a warmer and more unimpaired ſpirit of devotion, than is perhaps conſiſtent with being immerſed in the buſtle of life, might revive his languid piety; and that the religious impreſſions of both might derive new force and tenderneſs from the animating ſympathies of conjugal affection. Can a more pleaſing image be preſented to a conſiderate mind, than that of a couple, happy in each other and in the pledges of their mutual love, uniting in an act of grateful adoration to the author of all their mercies; recommending each other, and the objects of their common care, to the divine protection; and repreſſing the ſolicitude of conjugal and parental tenderneſs by a confiding hope, that, through all the changes of this uncertain life, the Diſpoſer of all things will aſſuredly cauſe all to work together for the good of them that love and put their truſt in him; and that, after this uncertain ſtate ſhall have paſſed away, they ſhall be admitted to a joint participation of never ending happineſs. It is ſurely no mean or ignoble office which we would allot to the female ſex, when we would thus commit to them the charge of maintaining in lively exerciſe whatever emotions moſt dignify and adorn human nature; when we would make them as it were the medium of our intercourſe with the heavenly world, the faithful repoſitories of the religious principle, for the benefit both of the preſent and of the riſing generation. Muſt it not then excite our grief and indignation, when we behold mothers, forgetful at once of their own peculiar duties, and of the high office which Providence deſigned their daughters to fulfil; exciting, inſtead of endeavouring to moderate in them, the natural ſanguineneſs and inconſiderateneſs of youth;

youth; hurrying them night after night to the reſorts of diſſipation; thus teaching them to deſpiſe the *common* comforts of the family circle; and, inſtead of ſtriving to raiſe their views, and to direct their affections to their true object, acting as if with the expreſs deſign ſtudiouſly to extinguiſh every ſpark of a devotional ſpirit, and to kindle in its ſtead an exceſſive love of pleaſure, and, perhaps, a principle of extravagant vanity, and ardent emulation!

Innocent young women! Good hearted young men! Wherein does this *goodneſs of heart* and this *innocence* appear? Remember that we are fallen creatures, born in ſin, and naturally depraved. Chriſtianity recogniſes no *innocence* or *goodneſs of heart*, but in the remiſſion of ſin, and in the effects of the operation of divine grace. Do we find in theſe young perſons the characters, which the holy Scriptures lay down as the only ſatisfactory evidences of a ſafe ſtate? Do we not on the other hand diſcover the ſpecified marks of a ſtate of alienation from God? Can the blindeſt partiality perſuade itſelf that *they* are loving, or ſtriving "to love God with all their "hearts, and minds, and ſouls, and ſtrength?" Are *they* "ſeeking firſt the kingdom of God, "and his righteouſneſs?" Are *they* "working "out their ſalvation with fear and trembling?" Are *they* "clothed with humility?" Are *they* not, on the contrary, ſupremely given up to ſelf-indulgence? Are *they* not at leaſt "lovers of "pleaſure more than lovers of God?" Are the offices of Religion *their* ſolace or *their* taſk? Do *they* not come to theſe ſacred ſervices with reluctance, continue in them by conſtraint, and quit them with gladneſs? And of how many of *theſe* perſons may it not be affirmed in the ſpirit of

the prophet's language: "The harp, and the "viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine, are in "their feaſts: but they regard not the work of "the Lord, neither conſider the operation of "his hands?" Are not the youth of one ſex often actually committing, and ſtill more often wiſhing for the opportunity to commit, thoſe ſins of which the Scripture ſays expreſsly, "that "they which do ſuch things *ſhall not* inherit "the kingdom of God?" Are not the youth of the other mainly intent on the gratification of vanity; and looking for their chief happineſs to the reſorts of gaiety and faſhion, to all the multiplied pleaſures which public places, or the ſtill higher gratifications of more refined circles, can ſupply?

And then, when the firſt ebullitions of youthful warmth are over, what is their boaſted reformation? They may be decent, ſober, uſeful, reſpectable, as members of the community, or amiable in the relations of domeſtic life. But is *this* the change of which the Scripture ſpeaks? Hear the expreſſions which it uſes, and judge for yourſelves—"Except a man be *born again*, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."—"The *old man*—is corrupt according to the de-"ceitful luſts;" an expreſſion but too deſcriptive of the vain delirium of youthful diſſipation, and of the falſe dreams of pleaſure which it inſpires; but "the *new man*" is awakened from this fallacious eſtimate of happineſs; "*he* is re-"newed in knowledge after the image of him "that created him"—"He is created *after God* "in righteouſneſs and true holineſs." The perſons of whom we are ſpeaking are no longer, indeed, ſo thoughtleſs, and wild, and diſſipated, as formerly; ſo negligent in their attention to objects

objects of real value; ſo eager in the purſuit of pleaſure; ſo prone to yield to the impulſe of appetite. But this is no more than the change of which a writer of no very ſtrict caſt ſpeaks, as naturally belonging to their riper age:

> Converſis ſtudiis, ætas, animuſque virilis
> Quærit opes, & amicitias: inſervit honori:
> Commiſiſſe cavet, quod mox mutare laboret.
>
> HOR.

This is a point of infinite importance: let it not be thought tedious to ſpend even yet a few more moments in the diſcuſſion of it. Put the queſtion to another iſſue, and try it, by appealing to the principle of life being a ſtate of probation; (a propoſition, indeed, true in a certain ſenſe, though not exactly in that which is ſometimes aſſigned to it,) and you will ſtill be led to no very different concluſion. Probation implies reſiſting, in obedience to the dictates of Religion, appetites which we are naturally prompted to gratify. Young people are not tempted to be churliſh, intereſted, covetous; but to be inconſiderate and diſſipated, "lovers of pleaſure more "than lovers of God." People again in middle age are not ſo ſtrongly tempted to be thoughtleſs, and idle, and licentious. From exceſſes of this ſort they are ſufficiently withheld, particularly when happily ſettled in domeſtic life, by a regard to their characters, by the reſtraints of family connections, and by a ſenſe of what is due to the decencies of the married ſtate. *Their* probation is of another ſort; *they* are tempted to be ſupremely engroſſed by worldly cares, by family intereſts, by profeſſional objects, by the purſuit of wealth or of ambition. Thus occupied, they are tempted to "mind earthly rather

"than

" than heavenly things," forgetting " the one " thing needful;" to " ſet their affections" on temporal rather than eternal concerns, and to take up with " a form of godlineſs," inſtead of ſeeking to experience the power thereof: the foundations of this nominal Religion being laid, as was formerly explained more at large, in the forgetfulneſs, if not in the ignorance, of the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity. Theſe are the *ready-made* Chriſtians formerly ſpoken of, who conſider Chriſtianity as a geographical term, properly applicable to all thoſe who have been born and educated in a country wherein Chriſtianity is profeſſed; not as indicating a renewed nature, as expreſſive of a peculiar character, with its appropriate deſires and averſions, and hopes, and fears, and joys, and ſorrows. To people of this deſcription, the ſolemn admonition of Chriſt is addreſſed; " I know thy " works; that thou haſt a name that thou " liveſt, and art dead. Be watchful, and " ſtrengthen the things which remain that are " ready to die; for I have not found thy works " perfect before God."

If there be any who is inclined to liſten to this ſolemn warning, who is awakened from his dream of falſe ſecurity, and is diſpoſed to be not only *almoſt* but *altogether* a Chriſtian—O! let him not ſtifle or diſſipate theſe beginnings of ſerioufneſs, but ſedalouſly cheriſh them as the " workings of " the Divine Spirit," which would draw him from the " broad" and crowded " road of de- " ſtruction into the narrow" and thinly peopled path " that leadeth to life." Let him retire from the multitude—Let him enter into his cloſet, and on his bended knees implore, for Chriſt's ſake and in reliance on his mediation, that

that God would "take away from him the heart "of ſtone, and give him a heart of fleſh;" that the Father of light would open his eyes to his true condition, and clear his heart from the clouds of prejudice, and diſſipate the deceitful medium of ſelf-love. Then let him carefully examine his paſt life, and his preſent courſe of conduct, comparing himſelf with God's word: and conſidering how any one might reaſonably have been expected to conduct himſelf, to whom the Holy Scriptures had been always open, and who had been uſed to acknowledge them to be the revelation of the will of his Creator, and Governor, and Supreme Benefactor; let him there peruſe the awful denunciations againſt impenitent ſinners; let him labour to become more and more deeply impreſſed with a ſenſe of his own radical blindneſs and corruption; above all, let him ſteadily contemplate, in all its bearings and connections, that ſtupendous truth, *the incarnation and crucifixion of the only begotten Son of God, and the meſſage of mercy proclaimed from the croſs to repenting ſinners.*—"Be ye reconciled "unto God."—"Believe in the Lord Jeſus "Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved."

When he fairly eſtimates the guilt of ſin by the coſtly ſatisfaction which was required to atone for it, and the worth of his ſoul by the price which was paid for its redemption, and contraſts both of theſe with his own ſottiſh inconſiderateneſs; when he reflects on the amazing love and pity of Chriſt, and on the cold and formal acknowledgments with which he has hitherto returned this infinite obligation, making light of the precious blood of the Son of God, and trifling with the gracious invitations of his Redeemer: ſurely, if he be not loſt to ſenſibility,

lity, mixed emotions of guilt, and fear, and ſhame, and remorſe, and ſorrow, will nearly overwhelm his ſoul; he will ſmite upon his breaſt, and cry out in the language of the publican, "God be merciful to me a ſinner." But, bleſſed be God, ſuch an one needs not deſpair—it is to perſons in this very ſituation, and with theſe very feelings, that the offers of the Goſpel are held forth, and its promiſes aſſured; "to the weary and heavy laden" under the burden of their ſins; to them who thirſt for the water of life; to them who feel themſelves "tied and bound by the chain of their ſins;" who abhor their captivity, and long earneſtly for deliverance. Happy, happy ſouls! which the grace of God has viſited, "has brought out "of darkneſs into his marvellous light," and "from the power of Satan unto God." Caſt yourſelves then on his undeſerved mercy; he is full of love, and will not ſpurn you: ſurrender yourſelves into his hands, and ſolemnly reſolve, through his Grace, to dedicate henceforth all your faculties and powers to his ſervice.

It is your's now "to work out your own ſal-"vation with fear and trembling," relying on the fidelity of him who has promiſed to "work "in you both to will and to do of his good "pleaſure." Ever look to him for help: your only ſafety conſiſts in a deep and abiding ſenſe of your own weakneſs, and in a firm reliance on his ſtrength. If you "give all diligence," his power is armed for your protection, his truth is pledged for your ſecurity. You are enliſted under the banner of Chriſt—Fear not, though the world, and the fleſh, and the devil are ſet in array againſt you.—"Faithful is he that hath pro-"miſed;"—"be ye alſo faithful unto death,

"and

" and he will give you a crown of life."—" He " that endureth to the end, the ſame ſhall be " ſaved." In ſuch a world as this, in ſuch a ſtate of ſociety as ours, eſpecially if in the higher walks of life, you muſt be prepared to meet with many difficulties: arm yourſelves, therefore, in the firſt place, with a determined reſolution not to rate human eſtimation beyond its true value; not to dread the charge of particularity, when it ſhall be neceſſary to incur it; but as was before recommended, let it be your conſtant endeavour to retain before your mental eye, that bright aſſemblage of inviſible ſpectators, who are the witneſſes of your daily conduct, and " to ſeek that honour which cometh " from God." You cannot advance a ſingle ſtep, till you are in ſome good meaſure poſſeſſed of this comparative indifference to the favour of men. We have before explained ourſelves too clearly to render it neceſſary to declare, that no one ſhould needleſsly affect ſingularity: but to aim at incompatible advantages, to ſeek to pleaſe God and the world, where their commands are really at variance, is the way to be neither reſpectable, nor good, nor happy. Continue to be ever aware of your own radical corruption and habitual weakneſs. Indeed, if your eyes be really opened, and your heart truly ſoftened, " hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs," riſing in your ideas of true holineſs, and proving the genuineneſs of your hope by deſiring " to " purify yourſelf even as God is pure;" you will become daily more and more ſenſible of your own defects, and wants, and weakneſſes; and more and more impreſſed by a ſenſe of the mercy and long ſuffering of that gracious Savi-

our, "who forgiveth all your ſin, and healeth "all your infirmities."

This is the ſolution of what to a man of the world might ſeem a ſtrange paradox, that in proportion as the Chriſtian grows in grace, he grows alſo in humility. Humility is indeed the vital principle of Chriſtianity; that principle by which from firſt to laſt ſhe lives and thrives, and in proportion to the growth or decline of which ſhe muſt decay or flouriſh. *This* firſt diſpoſes the ſinner in deep ſelf-abaſement to accept the offers of the Goſpel; *this*, during his whole progreſs, is the very ground and baſis of his feelings and conduct, both in relation to God, his fellow creatures, and himſelf; and when at length he ſhall be tranſlated into the realms of glory, *this* principle ſhall ſtill ſubſiſt in undiminiſhed force: He ſhall "fall down; and caſt his "crown before the Lamb; and aſcribe bleſſing, "and honour, and glory, and power, to him "that ſitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, "for ever and ever." The *practical* benefits of this habitual lowlineſs of ſpirit are too numerous, and at the ſame time too obvious; to require enumeration. It will lead you to dread the beginnings, and fly from the occaſions of ſin; as that man would ſhun ſome infectious diſtemper, who ſhould know that he was pre-diſpoſed to take the contagion. It will prevent a thouſand difficulties, and decide a thouſand queſtions, concerning worldly compliances; by which thoſe perſons are apt to be embarraſſed, who are not duly ſenſible of their own exceeding frailty, whoſe views of the Chriſtian character are not ſufficiently elevated, and who are not enough poſſeſſed with a continual fear of "grieving the "Holy Spirit of God," and of thus provoking him

him to withdraw his gracious influence. But if you are really such as we have been describing, you need not be urged to set the standard of practice high, and to strive after universal holiness. It is the desire of your hearts to act in all things with a single eye to the favour of God, and thus the most ordinary actions of life are raised into offices of Religion. This is the purifying, the transmuting principle, which realizes the fabled touch, which changes all to gold. But it belongs to this desire of pleasing God, that we should be continually solicitous to discover the path of duty; that we should not indolently wait, satisfied with not refusing occasions of glorifying God, when they are forced upon us; but that we should pray to God for wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we may be acute in discerning opportunities of serving him in the world, and judicious in selecting and wise in improving them. Guard indeed against the distraction of worldly cares; and cultivate heavenly mindedness, and a spirit of continual prayer, and neglect not to watch incessantly over the workings of your deceitful heart: but be active also, and useful. Let not your precious time be wasted "in shapeless idleness;" an admonition which, in our days, is rendered but too necessary by the relaxed habits of persons even of real piety: but wisely husband and improve this fleeting treasure. Never be satisfied with your present attainments; but "forgetting the things "which are behind," labour still to "press for-"ward" with undiminished energy, and to run the race that is set before you without flagging in your course.

Above all, measure your progress by your improvement in love to God and man. "God is "Love."

"Love." This is the ſacred principle, which warms and enlightens the heavenly world, that bleſſed ſeat of God's viſible preſence. There it ſhines with unclouded radiance. Some ſcattered beams of it are graciouſly lent to us on earth, or we had been benighted and loſt in darkneſs and miſery; but a larger portion of it is infuſed into the hearts of the ſervants of God, who thus "are renewed in the divine likeneſs," and even here exhibit ſome faint traces of the image of their heavenly Father. It is the principle of love which diſpoſes them to yield themſelves up without reſerve to the ſervice of him, "who has bought them with the price of his "own blood."

Servile, and baſe, and mercenary, is the notion of Chriſtian practice among the bulk of nominal Chriſtians. They give no more than they *dare* not with-hold; they abſtain from nothing but what they *muſt* not practiſe. When you ſtate to them the doubtful quality of any action, and the conſequent obligation to deſiſt from it, they reply to you in the very ſpirit of Shylock, "they "cannot find it in the bond." In ſhort, they know Chriſtianity only as a ſyſtem of reſtraints. She is deſpoiled of every liberal and generous principle: ſhe is rendered almoſt unfit for the ſocial intercourſes of life, and is only ſuited to the gloomy walls of that cloiſter, in which they would confine her. But *true Chriſtians* conſider themſelves not as ſatisfying ſome rigorous creditor, but as diſcharging a debt of gratitude. Their's is accordingly not the ſtinted return of a conſtrained obedience, but the large and liberal meaſure of a voluntary ſervice. This principle, therefore, as was formerly remarked, and has been recently obſerved of true Chriſtian humility,

ſity, prevents a thouſand *practical* embarraſſments, by which they are continually haraſſed, who act from a leſs generous motive; and who require it to be clearly aſcertained to them, that any gratification or worldly compliance, which may be in queſtion, is beyond the allowed boundary line of Chriſtian practice *. *This* principle regulates the true Chriſtian's choice of companions and friends, where he is at liberty to make an option; *this* fills him with the deſire of promoting the temporal well-being of all around him, and ſtill more with pity and love, and anxious ſolicitude for their ſpiritual welfare. Indifference indeed in this reſpect is one of the ſureſt ſigns of a low or declining ſtate in Religion. *This* animating principle it is, which in the true Chriſtian's happier hour inſpirits his devotions, and cauſes him to delight in the worſhip of God; which fills him with conſolation, and peace, and gladneſs, and ſometimes even enables him "to rejoice with joy unſpeakable "and full of glory."

* "Neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my "God," (ſays David) of that which doth coſt me nothing." "2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

"They," (the Apoſtles) "departed from the preſence of "the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to "ſuffer ſhame for the name of Jeſus." Acts v. 41. See alſo 1 Theſſ. i. 6. Heb. x. 34. James i. 2. 1 Peter iv. 13, 14.

Such are the marks exhibited in Scripture of a true love to God: and though our regard for our common Lord is not put to the ſame ſevere teſt, as that of the Apoſtles and firſt Chriſtians was; yet, if the ſame principle exiſted in us alſo, it would ſurely diſpoſe us to act in the *ſpirit* of that conduct; and prompt us rather to be willing to exceed in ſelf denials and labours for Chriſt's ſake, than to be ſo forward as we are to complain, whenever we are called upon to perform or to abſtain from any thing, though in an inſtance ever ſo little contrary to our inclinations.

But

But this world is not his reſting place: here, to the very laſt, he muſt be a pilgrim and a ſtranger; a ſoldier, whoſe warfare ends only with life, ever ſtruggling and combating with the powers of darkneſs, and with the temptations of the world around him, and the ſtill more dangerous hoſtilities of internal depravity. The perpetual viciſſitudes of this uncertain ſtate, the peculiar trials and difficulties with which the life of a Chriſtian is chequered, and ſtill more, the painful and humiliating remembrance of his own infirmities, teach him to look forward, almoſt with outſtretched neck, to that promiſed day, when he ſhall be completely delivered from the bondage of corruption, and ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away. In the anticipation of that bleſſed period, and comparing this churliſh and turbulent world, where competition, and envy, and anger, and revenge, ſo vex and agitate the ſons of men, with that bliſsful region where Love ſhall reign without diſturbance, and where all being knit together in bonds of indiſſoluble friendſhip, ſhall unite in one harmonious ſong of praiſe to the Author of their common happineſs, the true Chriſtian triumphs over the fear of death: he longs to realize theſe cheering images, and to obtain admiſſion into that bleſſed company.—With far more juſtice than it was originally uſed, he may adopt the beautiful exclamation—" O præclarum illum " diem, cum ad illud divinum animorum con- " cilium cœtumque proficiſcar, atque ex hac " turba et colluvione diſcedam!"

What has been now as well as formerly remarked, concerning the habitual feelings of the real believer, may ſuggeſt a reply to an objection common in the mouths of nominal Chriſtians,

tians, that we would deny men the innocent amuſements and gratifications of life; thus cauſing our Religion to wear a gloomy forbidding aſpect, inſtead of her true and natural face of cheerfulneſs and joy. This is a charge of ſo ſerious a nature, that although it lead into a digreſſion, it may not be improper to take ſome notice of it.

In the firſt place, Religion prohibits no amuſement or gratification which is *really* innocent. The queſtion, however, of its innocence, muſt not be tried by the looſe maxims of worldly morality, but by the ſpirit of the injunctions of the word of God; and by the indulgence being conformable or not conformable to the genius of Chriſtianity, and to the tempers and diſpoſitions of mind enjoined on its profeſſors. There can be no diſpute concerning the true end of recreations. They are intended to refreſh our exhauſted bodily or mental powers, and to reſtore us, with renewed vigour, to the more ſerious occupations of life. Whatever, therefore, fatigues either body or mind, inſtead of refreſhing them, is not fitted to anſwer the deſigned purpoſe. Whatever conſumes more time, or money, or thought, than it is expedient (I might ſay *neceſſary*) to allot to mere amuſement, can hardly be approved by any one who conſiders theſe talents as precious depoſits for the expenditure of which he will have to give account. Whatever directly or indirectly muſt be likely to injure the welfare of a fellow creature, can ſcarcely be a ſuitable *recreation* for a Chriſtian, who is "to "love his neighbour as himſelf;" or a very conſiſtent *diverſion* for any one, the buſineſs of whoſe life is to diffuſe happineſs.

But

But does a Chriſtian never relax? Let us not ſo wrong and vilify the bounty of Providence, as to allow for a moment that the ſources of innocent amuſement are ſo rare, that men muſt be driven, almoſt by conſtraint, to ſuch as are of a doubtful quality. On the contrary, ſuch has been the Creator's goodneſs, that almoſt every one, both of our phyſical and intellectual, and moral faculties (and the ſame may be ſaid of the whole creation which we ſee around us) is not only calculated to anſwer the proper end of its being, by its ſubſerviency to ſome purpoſe of ſolid uſefulneſs, but to be the inſtrument of adminiſtering pleaſure.

> Not content
> With every food of life to nouriſh man,
> Thou mak'ſt all nature beauty to his eye
> And muſic to his ear.

Our Maker alſo, in his kindneſs, has ſo conſtructed us, that even mere viciſſitude is grateful and refreſhing—a conſideration which ſhould prompt us often to ſeek, from a prudent *variation* of *uſeful purſuits*, that recreation, for which we are apt to reſort to what is altogether, *unproductive* and *unfruitful*.

Yet rich and multiplied are the ſprings of innocent relaxation. The Chriſtian relaxes in the temperate uſe of all the gifts of Providence. Imagination, and taſte, and genius, and the beauties of creation, and the works of art, lie open to him. He relaxes in the feaſt of reaſon, in the intercourſes of ſociety, in the ſweets of friendſhip, in the endearments of love, in the exerciſe of hope, of confidence, of joy, of gratitude, of univerſal good will, of all the benevolent and generous affections; which, by the gracious

gracious ordination of our Creator, while they diſintereſtedly intend only happineſs to others, are moſt ſurely productive to ourſelves of complacency and peace. O! little do they know of the true meaſure of enjoyment, who can compare theſe delightful complacencies with the frivolous pleaſures of diſſipation, or the coarſe gratifications of ſenſuality. It is no wonder, however, that the nominal Chriſtian ſhould reluctantly give up, one by one, the pleaſures of the world; and look back upon them, when relinquiſhed, with eyes of wiſtfulneſs and regret: becauſe he knows not the ſweetneſs of the delights with which true Chriſtianity repays thoſe trifling ſacrifices, and is greatly unacquainted with the *nature* of that pleaſantneſs which is to be found in the ways of Religion.

It is indeed true, that when any one, who has long been going on in the groſs and unreſtrained practice of vice, is checked in his career, and enters at firſt on a religious courſe, he has much to undergo. Fear, guilt, remorſe, ſhame, and various other paſſions, ſtruggle and conflict within him. His appetites are clamorous for their accuſtomed gratification, and inveterate habits are ſcarcely to be denied. He is weighed down by a load of guilt, and almoſt overwhelmed by the ſenſe of his unworthineſs. But all this ought in fairneſs to be charged to the account of his paſt ſins, and not to that of his preſent repentance. It rarely happens, however, that this ſtate of ſuffering continues very long. When the mental gloom is the blackeſt, a ray of heavenly light occaſionally breaks in, and ſuggeſts the hope of better days. Even in this life it commonly holds true, "They that ſow in tears "ſhall reap in joy."

Neither,

Neither, when we maintain, that the ways of Religion are ways of pleaſantneſs, do we mean to deny that the Chriſtian's internal ſtate is, through the whole of his life, a ſtate of diſcipline and warfare. Several of the cauſes which contribute to render it ſuch have been already pointed out, together with the workings of his mind in relation to them: but if he has ſolicitudes and griefs peculiar to himſelf, he has "joys "alſo with which a ſtranger intermeddles not."

"Drink deep," however, "or taſte not," is a direction full as applicable to Religion, if we would find it a ſource of pleaſure, as it is to knowledge. A little Religion is, it muſt be confeſſed, apt to make men gloomy, as a little knowledge to render them vain: hence the unjuſt imputation often brought upon Religion by thoſe, whoſe degree of Religion is juſt ſufficient, by condemning their courſe of conduct, to render them uneaſy: enough merely to impair the ſweetneſs of the pleaſures of ſin, and not enough to compenſate for the relinquiſhment of them by its own peculiar comforts. Thus theſe men bring up, as it were, an ill report of that land of promiſe, which, in truth, abounds with whatever, in our journey through life, can beſt refreſh and ſtrengthen us.

We have enumerated ſome ſources of pleaſure which men of the world may underſtand, and muſt acknowledge to belong to the true Chriſtian; but there are others, and thoſe of a ſtill higher claſs, to which they muſt confeſs themſelves ſtrangers. To ſay nothing of a qualified, I dare not ſay an entire, exemption from thoſe diſtracting paſſions and corroding cares, by which he muſt naturally be haraſſed, whoſe treaſure is within the reach of mortal accidents; there is

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the humble quiet-giving hope of being reconciled to God, and of enjoying his favour; with that ſolid peace of mind, which the world can neither give nor take away, that reſults from a firm confidence in the infinite wiſdom and goodneſs of God, and in the unceaſing care and kindneſs of a gracious Saviour: and there is the perſuaſion of the truth of the divine aſſurance, that all things ſhall work together for good.

When the pulſe indeed beats high, and we are fluſhed with youth, and health, and vigour; when all goes on proſperouſly, and ſucceſs ſeems almoſt to anticipate our wiſhes; then we feel not the want of the conſolations of Religion: but when fortune frowns, or friends forſake us; when ſorrow, or ſickneſs, or old age, comes upon us, then it is, that the ſuperiority of the pleaſures of Religion is eſtabliſhed over thoſe of diſſipation and vanity, which are ever apt to fly from us when we are moſt in want of their aid. There is ſcarcely a more melancholy ſight to a conſiderate mind, than that of an old man, who is a ſtranger to thoſe only true ſources of ſatisfaction. How affecting, and at the ſame time how diſguſting, is it to ſee ſuch an one awkwardly catching at the pleaſures of his younger years, which are now beyond his reach; or feebly attempting to retain them, while they mock his endeavours and elude his graſp! To ſuch an one, *gloomily* indeed does the evening of life ſet in! All is ſour and cheerleſs. He can neither look backward with complacency nor forward with hope: while the aged Chriſtian, relying on the aſſured mercy of his Redeemer, can calmly reflect that his diſmiſſion is at hand; that his redemption draweth nigh: while

while his ſtrength declines, and his faculties decay, he can quietly repoſe himſelf on the fidelity of God: and at the very entrance of the valley of the ſhadow of death, he can lift up an eye, dim, perhaps, and feeble, yet occaſionally ſparkling with hope, and confidently looking forward to the near poſſeſſion of his heavenly inheritance, "to thoſe joys which eye "hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither hath "it entered into the heart of man to conceive."

Never were there times which inculcated more forcibly than thoſe in which we live, the wiſdom of ſeeking a happineſs beyond the reach of human viciſſitudes. What ſtriking leſſons have *we* had of the precarious tenure of all ſublunary poſſeſſions! Wealth, and power, and proſperity, how peculiarly tranſitory and uncertain! But Religion diſpenſes her choiceſt cordials in the ſeaſons of exigence, in poverty, in exile, in ſickneſs, and in death. The eſſential ſuperiority of that ſupport which is derived from Religion is leſs felt, at leaſt it is leſs apparent, when the Chriſtian is in full poſſeſſion of riches, and ſplendour, and rank, and all the gifts of nature and fortune. But when all theſe are ſwept away by the rude hand of time, or the rough blaſts of adverſity, the true Chriſtian ſtands, like the glory of the foreſt, erect and vigorous; ſtripped indeed of his ſummer foliage, but more than ever diſcovering to the obſerving eye the ſolid ſtrength of his ſubſtantial texture:

Pondere fixa ſuo eſt, nudoſque per aera ramos
Attollens, trunco non frondibus efficit umbram.

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SECTION II.

Advice to ſome who profeſs their full Aſſent to the fundamental Doctrines of the Goſpel.

IN a former chapter we largely inſiſted on what may be termed the fundamental practical error of the bulk of profeſſed Chriſtians in our days; their either overlooking or miſconceiving the peculiar method, which the Goſpel has provided for the renovation of our corrupted nature, and for the attainment of every Chriſtian grace.

But there are miſtakes on the right hand and on the left; and our general proneneſs, when we are flying from one extreme to run into an oppoſite error, renders it neceſſary to ſuperadd another admonition. The generally prevailing error of the preſent day, indeed, is that fundamental one which was formerly pointed out. But while we attend, in the firſt place, to this; and, on the warrant both of Scripture and experience, preſcribe hearty repentance and lively faith, as the only root and foundation of all true holineſs; we muſt at the ſame time guard againſt a practical miſtake of another kind. They who, with penitent hearts, have humbled themſelves before the croſs of Chriſt; and who, pleading his merits as their only ground of pardon and acceptance with God, have reſolved henceforth, through the help of his Spirit, to bring forth the fruits of righteouſneſs, are ſometimes apt to conduct themſelves as if they conſidered their work as now done; or at leaſt as if this were the whole they had to do, as often as, by falling afreſh into ſin, another act of repentance

tance and faith may ſeem to have become neceſſary. There are not a few in our relaxed age, who thus ſatisfy themſelves with what may be termed *general* Chriſtianity; who feel *general* penitence and humiliation from a ſenſe of their ſinfulneſs *in general*, and *general* deſires of univerſal holineſs; but who neglect that vigilant and jealous care, with which they ſhould labour to extirpate every *particular* corruption, by ſtudying its nature, its root, its ramifications, and thus becoming acquainted with its ſecret movements, with the means whereby it gains ſtrength, and with the moſt effectual methods of reſiſting it. In like manner, they are far from ſtriving with perſevering alacrity for the acquiſition and improvement of every Chriſtian grace. Nor is it unuſual for miniſters, who preach the truths of the Goſpel with fidelity, ability, and ſucceſs, to be themſelves alſo liable to the charge of dwelling altogether in their inſtructions on this *general* Religion: inſtead of tracing and laying open all the ſecret motions of inward corruption, and inſtructing their hearers how beſt to conduct themſelves in every diſtinct part of the Chriſtian warfare; how beſt to ſtrive againſt each particular vice, and to cultivate each grace of the Chriſtian character. Hence it is, that in too many perſons, concerning the ſincerity of whoſe general profeſſions of Religion we ſhould be ſorry to entertain a doubt, we yet ſee little progreſs made in the regulation of their tempers, in the improvement of their time, in the reform of their plan of life, or inability to reſiſt the temptation to which they are particularly expoſed. They will confeſs themſelves, in general terms, to be "*miſerable ſinners:*" this is a tenet of their creed, and they feel even proud in avowing it. They will

will occaſionally alſo lament particular failings: but this confeſſion is ſometimes obviouſly made, in order to draw forth a compliment for the very oppoſite virtue: and where this is not the caſe, it is often not difficult to detect, under this falſe guiſe of contrition, a ſecret ſelf-complacency, ariſing from the manifeſtations which they have afforded of their acuteneſs or candour in diſcovering the infirmity in queſtion, or of their frankneſs or humility in acknowledging it. This will ſcarcely ſeem an illiberal ſuſpicion to any one, who either watches the workings of his own heart, or who obſerves, that the faults confeſſed in theſe inſtances are very ſeldom thoſe, with which the perſon is moſt clearly and ſtrongly chargeable.

We muſt plainly warn theſe men, and the conſideration is ſeriouſly preſſed on their inſtructors alſo, *that they are in danger of deceiving themſelves. Let them beware leſt they be nominal Chriſtians of another ſort.* Theſe perſons require to be reminded, that there is no *ſhort compendious method of holineſs;* but that it muſt be the buſineſs of their whole lives to grow in grace, and continually adding one virtue to another, as far as may be, "to go on towards perfection." "He only "that doeth righteouſneſs is righteous." Unleſs "they bring forth the fruits of the Spirit," they can have no ſufficient evidence that they have received that "Spirit of Chriſt, without "which they are none of his." But where, on the whole, our unwillingneſs to paſs an unfavourable judgment may lead us to indulge a hope, that "the root of the matter is found in "them;" yet we muſt at leaſt declare to them, that inſtead of adorning the doctrine of Chriſt, they diſparage and diſcredit it. The world ſees not

not their ſecret humiliation, nor the exerciſes of their cloſets, but it is acute in diſcerning practical weakneſſes: and if it obſerve that they have the ſame eagerneſs in the purſuit of wealth or ambition, the ſame vain taſte for oſtentation and diſplay, the ſame ungoverned tempers, which are found in the generality of mankind; it will treat with contempt their pretences to ſuperior ſanctity and indifference to worldly things, and will be hardened in its prejudices againſt the only mode, which God has provided for our eſcaping the wrath to come, and obtaining eternal happineſs.

Let him then, who would be indeed a Chriſtian, watch over his ways and over his heart with unceaſing circumſpection. Let him endeavour to learn, both from men and books, particularly from the lives of eminent Chriſtians *(a)*, what methods have been actually found moſt effectual for the conqueſt of every particular vice, and for improvement in every branch of holineſs. Thus ſtudying his own character, and obſerving the moſt ſecret workings of his own mind, and of our common nature; the knowledge which he will acquire of the human heart in general, and eſpecially of his own, will be of the higheſt utility, in enabling him to avoid or to guard againſt the occa-

(a) It may not be amiſs to mention a few uſeful publications of this ſort. Walton's Lives, particularly the laſt edition by Mr. Zouch; Gilpin's Lives; the Lives of Biſhop Bedell and Biſhop Bull; of Archbiſhop Uſher; ſome extracts from Burnet of the Life of the incomparable Leighton, prefixed to a volume of the latter's Sermons; Paſſages of the Life of Lord Rocheſter, by Burnet; the Life of Sir Matthew Hale; of the excellent Doddridge, by Orton; of Henry, father and ſon; of Mather; of Halyburton; Hampſon's and Whitehead's Life of Weſley; Life of Baxter, by himſelf, &c. &c. &c.

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ſions of evil: and it will alſo tend, above all things, to the growth of humility, and to the maintenance of that ſobriety of ſpirit and tenderneſs of conſcience, which are eminently characteriſtic of the true Chriſtian. It is by this unceaſing diligence, as the Apoſtle declares, that the ſervants of Chriſt muſt make their calling ſure. Their labour will not be thrown away; for "an entrance ſhall" at length "be "miniſtered unto them abundantly, into the "everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour "Jeſus Chriſt."

SECT. III.

Brief Obſervations addreſſed to Sceptics and Unitarians.

THERE is another claſs of men, an increaſing claſs, it is to be feared, in this country, that of abſolute unbelievers, with which this little work has properly no concern: but may the writer, ſincerely pitying their melancholy ſtate, be permitted to aſk them one plain queſtion? If Chriſtianity be not in their eſtimation true, yet is there not at leaſt a preſumption in its favour, ſufficient to entitle it to a ſerious examination; from its having been embraced, and that not blindly and implicitly, but upon full inquiry and deep conſideration, by Bacon, and Milton, and Locke, and Newton, and much the greater part of thoſe, who, by the reach of their underſtandings, or the extent of their knowledge, and by the freedom too of their minds, and their daring to combat exiſting prejudices, have called

forth the reſpect and admiration of mankind? It might be deemed ſcarcely fair to inſiſt on Churchmen, though ſome of them are among the greateſt names this country has ever known. Can the ſceptic in general ſay with truth, that he has either proſecuted an examination into the evidences of Revelation at all, or at leaſt with a ſerioufneſs and diligence in any degree proportioned to the importance of the ſubject? The fact is, and it is a fact which redounds to the honour of Chriſtianity, that infidelity is not the reſult of ſober inquiry and deliberate preference. It is rather the ſlow production of a careleſs and irreligious life, operating together with prejudices and erroneous conceptions, concerning the nature of the leading doctrines and fundamental tenets of Chriſtianity.

Take the caſe of young men of condition, bred up by what we have termed nominal Chriſtians. When children, they are carried to church, and thence they become acquainted with ſuch parts of Scripture as are contained in our public ſervice. If their parents preſerve ſtill more of the cuſtoms of better times, they are taught their Catechiſm, and furniſhed with a little farther religious knowledge. After a while, they go from under the eyes of their parents; they enter into the world, and move forward in the path of life, whatever it may be, which has been aſſigned to them. They yield to the temptations which aſſail them, and become, more or leſs, diſſipated and licentious. At leaſt they neglect to look into their Bible; they do not enlarge the ſphere of their religious acquiſitions; they do not even endeavour, by reflection and ſtudy, to turn into what may deſerve the name of knowledge and rational conviction, the opi-

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nions which, in their childhood, they had taken on truſt.

They travel, perhaps, into foreign countries; a proceeding which naturally tends to weaken their nurſery, prejudice in favour of the Religion in which they were bred, and by removing them from all means of public worſhip, to relax their practical habits of Religion. They return home, and commonly are either hurried round in the vortex of diſſipation, or engage with the ardour of youthful minds in ſome public or profeſſional purſuit. If they read or hear any thing about Chriſtianity, it is commonly only about thoſe tenets which are ſubjects of controverſy: and what reaches their ears of the Bible, from their occaſional attendance at church; though it may ſometimes impreſs them with an idea of the purity of Chriſtian morality, contains much which, coming thus detached, perplexes and offends them, and ſuggeſts various doubts and ſtartling objections, which a farther acquaintance with the Scripture would remove. Thus growing more and more to know Chriſtianity only by the difficulties it contains; ſometimes tempted by the ambition of ſhewing themſelves ſuperior to vulgar prejudice, and always prompted by the natural pride of the human heart to caſt off their ſubjection to dogmas impoſed on them; diſguſted, perhaps, by the immoral lives of ſome profeſſed Chriſtians, by the weakneſſes and abſurdities of others, and by what they obſerve to be the implicit belief of numbers, whom they ſee and know to be equally ignorant with themſelves, many doubts and ſuſpicions of greater or leſs extent ſpring up within them. Theſe doubts enter into the mind at firſt almoſt imperceptibly: they exiſt only as vague indiſtinct ſurmiſes, and

by no means take the preciſe ſhape or the ſubſtance of a formed opinion. At firſt, probably, they even offend and ſtartle by their intruſion: but by degrees the unpleaſant ſenſations which they once excited wear off: the mind grows more familiar with them. A confuſed ſenſe (for ſuch it is, rather than a formed idea) of its being deſirable that their doubts ſhould prove well founded, and of the comfort and enlargement which would be afforded by that proof, lends them much ſecret aid. The impreſſion becomes deeper; not in conſequence of being reinforced by freſh arguments, but merely by dint of having longer reſted in the mind; and as they increaſe in force, they creep on and extend themſelves. At length they diffuſe themſelves over the whole of Religion, and poſſeſs the mind in undiſturbed occupancy.

It is by no means meant that this is univerſally the proceſs. But, ſpeaking generally, this might be termed, perhaps not unjuſtly, the *natural hiſtory* of ſcepticiſm. It approves itſelf to the experience of thoſe who have with any care watched the progreſs of infidelity in perſons around them; and it is confirmed by the written lives of ſome of the moſt eminent unbelievers. It is curious to read their own accounts of themſelves, the rather as they accord ſo exactly with the reſult of our own obſervation.—We find that they once perhaps gave a ſort of implicit hereditary aſſent to the truth of Chriſtianity, and were what, by a miſchievous perverſion of language, the world denominates *believers*. How were they then awakened from their ſleep of ignorance? At what moment did the light of truth beam in upon them, and diſſipate the darkneſs in which they had been involved? The pe-

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riod of their infidelity is marked by no ſuch determinate boundary. Reaſon, and thought, and inquiry had little or nothing to do with it. Having for many years lived careleſs and irreligious lives, and aſſociated with companions equally careleſs and irreligious; not by force of ſtudy and reflection, but rather by the lapſe of time, they at length attained to their infidel maturity. It is worthy of remark, that where any are reclaimed from infidelity, it is generally by a proceſs much more rational than that which has been here deſcribed. Something awakens them to reflection. They examine, they conſider, and at length yield their aſſent to Chriſtianity on what they deem ſufficient grounds.

From the account here given, it appears plainly that infidelity is generally the offſpring of prejudice, and that its ſucceſs is mainly to be aſcribed to the depravity of the moral character. This fact is confirmed by the undeniable truth, that in *ſocieties*, which conſiſt of individuals, infidelity is the natural fruit, not ſo much of a ſtudious and diſputatious, as of a diſſipated and vicious age. It diffuſes itſelf in proportion as the general morals decline; and it is embraced with leſs apprehenſion, when every infidel is kept in ſpirits, by ſeeing many around him who are ſharing fortunes with himſelf.

To any fair mind this conſideration alone might be offered, as ſuggeſting a ſtrong argument againſt infidelity, and in favour of Revelation. And the friends of Chriſtianity might juſtly retort the charge, which their opponents often urge with no little affectation of ſuperior wiſdom; that we implicitly ſurrender ourſelves to the influence of prejudice, inſtead of examining

mining diſpaſſionately the ground of our faith, and yielding our aſſent only according to the degree of evidence.

In our own days, when it is but too clear that infidelity increaſes, it is not in conſequence of the reaſonings of the infidel writers having been much ſtudied, but from the progreſs of luxury, and the decay of morals: and, ſo far as this increaſe may be traced at all to the works of ſceptical writers; it has been produced, not by argument and diſcuſſion, but by ſarcaſms and points of wit, which have operated on weak minds, or on nominal Chriſtians, by bringing gradually into contempt, opinions which, in their caſe, had only reſted on the baſis of blind reſpect and the prejudices of education. It may therefore be laid down as an axiom, that *infidelity is in general a diſeaſe of the heart more than of the underſtanding*. If Revelation were aſſailed only by reaſon and argument, it would have little to fear. The literary oppoſers of Chriſtianity, from Herbert to Hume, have been ſeldom read. They made ſome ſtir in their day: during their ſpan of exiſtence they were noiſy and noxious; but like the locuſts of the eaſt, which for a while obſcure the air, and deſtroy the verdure, they were ſoon ſwept away and forgotten. Their very names would be ſcarcely found, if Leland had not preſerved them from oblivion.

The account which has been given, of the ſecret, but grand, ſource of infidelity, may perhaps juſtly be extended, as being not ſeldom true in the caſe of thoſe who deny the fundamental doctrines of the Goſpel.

In the courſe which we lately traced from nominal orthodoxy to abſolute infidelity, Unitarianiſm

rianiſm *(a)* is indeed, a ſort of half-way houſe, if the expreſſion may be pardoned; a ſtage on the journey, where ſometimes a perſon indeed finally ſtops, but where, not unfrequently, he only pauſes for a while, and then purſues his progreſs.

The Unitarian teachers by no means profeſs to abſolve their followers from the unbending ſtrictneſs of Chriſtian morality. They preſcribe the predominant love of God, and an habitual ſpirit of devotion: but it is an unqueſtionable fact; a fact which they themſelves almoſt admit, that this claſs of religioniſts is not in general diſtinguiſhed for ſuperior purity of life; and ſtill leſs for that frame of mind, which, by the injunction "to be ſpiritually, not carnally, minded," the word of God preſcribes to us, as one of the ſureſt teſts of our experiencing the vital power of Chriſtianity. On the contrary, in point of fact, *Unitarianiſm* ſeems to be reſorted to, not merely by thoſe who are diſguſted with the peculiar doctrines of Chriſtianity; but by thoſe alſo who are ſeeking a refuge from the ſtrictneſs of her practical precepts; and who, more particularly, would eſcape from the obligation which ſhe impoſes on her adherents, rather to incur the dreaded charge of ſingularity, than fall in with the declining manners of a diſſipated age.

Unitarianiſm, where it may be ſuppoſed to proceed from the underſtanding rather than

(a) The author is aware, that he may perhaps be cenſured for conceding this term to the claſs of perſons now in queſtion, ſince orthodox Chriſtians equally contend for the unity of the Divine Nature: and it perhaps may hardly be a ſufficient excuſe, that, it not being his object particularly to refute the errors of Unitarianiſm, he uſes the term in its popular ſenſe rather than give needleſs offence. He thus guards, however, againſt any falſe conſtruction being drawn from his uſe of it.

from

from the heart, is not unfrequently produced by a confuſed idea of the difficulties, or, as they are termed, the impoſſibilities which orthodox Chriſtianity is ſuppoſed to involve. It is not our intention to enter into the controverſy: *(a)* but it may not be improper to make one remark as a guard to perſons in whoſe way the arguments of the Unitarians may be likely to fall; namely, that one great advantage poſſeſſed by Deiſts, and perhaps in a ſtill greater degree by Unitarians, in their warfare with the Chriſtian ſyſtem, reſults from the very circumſtances of their being the aſſailants. They urge what they ſtate to be powerful arguments againſt the truth of the fundamental doctrines of Chriſtianity, and then call upon men to abandon them as poſts no longer tenable. But they, who are diſpoſed to yield to this aſſault, ſhould call to mind, that it has pleaſed God ſo to eſtabliſh the conſtitution of all things, that perplexing difficulties and plauſible objections may be adduced againſt the moſt eſtabliſhed truths; ſuch, for inſtance, as the being of a God, and many others both phyſical and moral. In all caſes, therefore, it becomes us, not on a partial view to reject any propoſition, becauſe it is attended with difficulties; but to compare the difficulties which it involves, with thoſe which attend the alternative propoſition which muſt be embraced on its rejection.

(a) The author of this treatiſe has, ſince its completion, peruſed a work entitled, Calviniſm and Socinianiſm compared, by A. Fuller, &c: and, without reference to the peculiarities of Calviniſm, he is happy to embrace this opportunity of confeſſing the high obligation which, in common with all the friends of true Religion, he owes to the author of that highly valuable publication for his maſterly defence of the doctrines of Chriſtianity, and his acute refutation of the oppoſite errors.

We ſhould put to the proof the alternative propoſition in its turn, and ſee whether it be not ſtill leſs tenable than that which we are ſummoned to abandon. In ſhort, we ſhould examine circumſpectly on all ſides; and abide by that opinion which, on carefully balancing all conſiderations, appears fairly entitled to our preference. Experience, however, will have convinced the attentive obſerver of thoſe around him, that it has been for want of adverting to this juſt and obvious principle, that the Unitarians in particular have gained moſt of their proſelytes from the Church, ſo far as argument has contributed to their ſucceſs. If the Unitarians, or even the Deiſts, were conſidered in their turn as maſters of the field; and were in their turn attacked, both by arguments tending to diſprove their ſyſtem directly, and to diſprove it indirectly, by ſhewing the high probability of the truth of Chriſtianity, and of its leading and peculiar doctrines, it is moſt likely that they would ſoon appear wholly unable to keep their ground. In ſhort, reaſoning fairly, there is no medium between abſolute *Pyrrhoniſm* and true Chriſtianity: and if we reject the latter on account of its difficulties, we ſhall be ſtill more loudly called upon to reject every other ſyſtem which has been offered to the acceptance of mankind. This conſideration might, perhaps, with advantage be more attended to than it has been, by thoſe who take upon them to vindicate the truth of our holy religion: as many, who from inconſideration, or any other cauſe, are diſpoſed to give up the great fundamentals of Chriſtianity, would be ſtartled by the idea, that on the ſame principle on which they did this, they muſt give up the hope of finding any reſt for the ſole of

their foot on any ground of Religion, and not ſtop ſhort of unqualified Atheiſm.

Beſides the claſs of thoſe who profeſſedly reject revelation, there is another, and that alſo, it is to be feared, an increaſing one, which may be called the claſs of half-unbelievers, who are to be found in various degrees of approximation to a ſtate of abſolute infidelity. The ſyſtem, if it deſerve the name, of theſe men, is groſsly irrational. Hearing many who aſſert and many who deny the truth of Chriſtianity, and not reflecting ſeriouſly enough to conſider that it muſt be either true or falſe, they take up a ſtrange ſort of middle opinion of its qualified truth. They conceive that there muſt be ſomething in it, though by no means to the extent to which it is puſhed by orthodox Chriſtians. They grant the reality of future puniſhment, and even that they themſelves cannot altogether expect to eſcape it; yet, "they truſt it will not go ſo hard "with them as the churchmen ſtate:" and, as was formerly hinted, though diſbelieving almoſt every material doctrine which Chriſtianity contains; yet, even in their own minds, they by no means conceive themſelves to be inliſted under the banners of infidelity, or to have much cauſe for any great apprehenſion leſt Chriſtianity ſhould prove true.

But let theſe men be reminded, that there is no middle way. If they can be prevailed on to look into their Bible, and do not make up their minds abſolutely to reject its authority; they muſt admit that there is no ground whatever for this vain hope, which they ſuffer themſelves to indulge, of eſcaping but with a ſlight meaſure of puniſhment. Nor let them think their guilt inconſiderable.

conſiderable. Is it not groſsly criminal to trifle with the long-ſuffering of God, to deſpiſe alike his invitations and his threatenings, and the offer of his Spirit of grace, and the precious blood of the Redeemer? Far different is the Scripture eſtimate; "How ſhall we eſcape if we neglect "ſo great ſalvation?" "It ſhall be more tole-"rable for Sodom and Gomorrah, in the day "of judgment," than for them, who voluntarily ſhut their eyes againſt that full light, which the bounty of Heaven has poured out upon them. Theſe half-unbelievers are even more reprehenſible than downright ſceptics, for remaining in this ſtate of careleſs uncertainty, without endeavouring to aſcertain the truth or falſehood of revelation. The probability which they admit, that it may be true, impoſes on them an additional and an undeniable obligation to inquiry. But both to them and to decided ſceptics it muſt be plainly declared, that they are in theſe days leſs excuſable than ever, for not looking into the grounds and proofs on which is reſted the truth of Chriſtianity; for never before were theſe proofs ſo *plainly*, *and at ſo eaſy a rate*, offered to the conſideration of mankind. Through the bounty of Providence, the more widely ſpreading poiſon of infidelity has in our days been met with more numerous and more powerful antidotes. One of theſe has been already pointed out: and it ſhould be matter of farther gratitude to every real Chriſtian, that in the very place on which modern infidelity had diſplayed the ſtandard of victory, a warrior in the ſervice of Religion, a man of the moſt acute diſcernment and profound reſearch, has been raiſed up by Providence to quell their triumph

triumph *(a)*. He was ſoon taken from us; but happily for him and for ourſelves, not till he had announced, that, like the Magi of old, he had ſeen the ſtar of Chriſt in the Eaſt, and had fallen down and worſhipped him. Another ſhould be mentioned with honour, who is purſuing the track which that great man had pointed out *(b)*. Henceforth let all objectors againſt Chriſtianity, on the ground of its being diſproved by the oriental records, be put to ſilence. The ſtrength of their cauſe conſiſted in their ignorance, and in our own, of oriental learning. They availed themſelves for a while of our being in a ſtate of darkneſs; but the light of day has at length broken in and expoſed to deſerved contempt their ſuperficial ſpeculations.

The infatuation of theſe unbelievers upon truſt would be leſs ſtriking, if they were able altogether to decline Chriſtianity; and were at liberty to relinquiſh their pretenſions to its rewards, on condition of being exempted from its puniſhments. But that is not the caſe; they muſt ſtand the riſk of the encounter, and their eternal happineſs or miſery is ſuſpended upon the iſſue *(c)*. What muſt be the emotions of theſe men, on firſt opening their eyes in the world of ſpirits, and being convinced, too late,

(a) It is almoſt ſuperfluous to ſtate, that Sir WILLIAM JONES is here meant, who, from the teſtimony borne to his extraordinary talents by Sir John Shore, in his firſt addreſs to the Aſiatic Society of Calcutta, appears to have been a man of moſt extraordinary genius and aſtoniſhing erudition.

(b) Mr. MAURICE.

(c) This argument is preſſed with uncommon force in PASCAL's Thoughts on Religion, a work highly valuable, though not in every part to be approved; abounding in particular with thoſe deep views of Religion, which the name of its author prepares us to expect.

of

of the awful reality of their impending ruin? May the mercy and the power of God awaken them from their desperate slumber, while life is yet spared, and there is yet space for repentance!

SECTION IV.

Advice suggested by the state of the times to true Christians.

To those, who really deserve the appellation of true Christians, much has been said incidentally in the course of the present work. It has been maintained, and the proposition will not be disputed by any sound or experienced politician, that they are always most important members of the community. But we may boldly assert, that there never was a period wherein, more justly than in the present, this could be affirmed of them; whether the situation, in all its circumstances, of our own country be attentively considered, or the general state of society in Europe. Let them on their part seriously weigh the important station which they fill, and the various duties which it now peculiarly enforces on them. If we consult the most intelligent accounts of foreign countries, which have been recently published, and compare them with the reports of former travellers; we must be convinced, that Religion and the standard of morals are every where declining, abroad even more rapidly than in our own country. But still, the progress of irreligion, and the decay of morals at home, are such as to alarm every considerate

ate mind, and to forebode the worſt conſequences, unleſs ſome remedy can be applied to the growing evil. We can depend only upon true *Chriſtians* for effecting, in any degree, this important ſervice. Their ſyſtem, as was formerly ſtated, is that of our national church: and in proportion, therefore, as their ſyſtem prevails, or as it increaſes in reſpect and eſtimation, from the manifeſt good conduct of its followers; in that very proportion the church is ſtrengthened in the foundations, on which alone it can be much longer ſupported, the eſteem and attachment of its members, and of the nation at large. Zeal is required in the cauſe of Religion; the only can feel it. The charge of ſingularity muſt be incurred; they only will dare to encounter it. Uniformity of conduct, and perſeverance in exertion, will be requiſite; among no others can we look for thoſe qualities.

Let true Chriſtians then, with becoming earneſtneſs, ſtrive in all things to recommend their profeſſion, and to put to ſilence the vain ſcoffs of ignorant objectors. Let them boldly aſſert the cauſe of Chriſt in an age when ſo many, who bear the name of Chriſtians, are aſhamed of Him: and let them conſider as devolved on Them the important duty of ſuſpending for a while the fall of their country, and, perhaps, of performing a ſtill more extenſive ſervice to ſociety at large; not by buſy interference in politics, in which it cannot but be confeſſed there is much uncertainty; but rather by that ſure and radical benefit of reſtoring the influence of Religion, and of raiſing the ſtandard of morality.

Let them be active, uſeful, generous towards others; manifeſtly moderate and ſelf-denying in themſelves. Let them be aſhamed of idleneſs,

as they would be of the moſt acknowledged ſin. When Providence bleſſes them with affluence, let them withdraw from the competition of vanity; and, without ſordidneſs or abſurdity, ſhew by their modeſt demeanour, and by their retiring from diſplay, that, without affecting ſingularity, they are not ſlaves to faſhion; that they conſider it as their duty to ſet an example of moderation and ſobriety, and to reſerve for nobler and more diſintereſted purpoſes, that money, which others ſelfiſhly waſte in parade, and dreſs, and equipage. Let them evince, in ſhort, a manifeſt moderation in all temporal things; as becomes thoſe whoſe affections are ſet on higher objects than any which this world affords, and who poſſeſs, within their own boſoms, a fund of ſatisfaction and comfort, which the world ſeeks in vanity and diſſipation. Let them cultivate a catholic ſpirit of univerſal good will, and of amicable fellowſhip towards all thoſe, of whatever ſect or denomination, who, differing from them in non-eſſentials, agree with them in the grand fundamentals of Religion. Let them countenance men of real piety wherever they are found; and encourage in others every attempt to repreſs the progreſs of vice, and to revive and diffuſe the influence of Religion and virtue. Let their earneſt prayers be conſtantly offered, that ſuch endeavours may be ſucceſsful, and that the abuſed long-ſuffering of God may ſtill continue to us the invaluable privilege of vital Chriſtianity.

Let them pray continually for their country in this ſeaſon of national difficulty. We bear upon us but too plainly the marks of a declining empire. Who can ſay but that the Governor of the univerſe, who declares himſelf to be a God

who

who hears the prayers of his ſervants, may, in anſwer to their interceſſions, for a while avert our ruin, and continue to us the fulneſs of thoſe temporal bleſſings, which in ſuch abundant meaſure we have hitherto enjoyed *(a)*. Men of the world, indeed, however they may admit the natural operation of natural cauſes, and may therefore confeſs the effects of Religion and morality in promoting the well being of the community; may yet, according to their humour, with a ſmile of complacent pity, or a ſneer of ſupercilious contempt, read of the ſervice which real Chriſtians may render to their country, by conciliating the favour and calling down the bleſſing of Providence. It may appear in their eyes an inſtance of the ſame ſuperſtitious weakneſs, as that which prompts the terrified inhabitant of Sicily to bring for the image of his tutelar ſaint, in order to ſtop the deſtructive ravages of Ætna. We are, however, ſure, if we believe the Scripture, that God will be diſpoſed to favour the nation to which his ſervants belong; and that, in fact, ſuch as They, have often been the unknown and unhonoured inſtruments of drawing down on their country the bleſſings of ſafety and proſperity.

But it would be an inſtance in myſelf of that very falſe ſhame which I have condemned in others, if I were not boldly to avow my firm perſuaſion, that *to the decline of Religion and morality our national difficulties muſt both directly and indirectly be chiefly aſcribed; and that my only ſolid hopes for the well-being of my country depend not ſo much on her fleets and armies, not ſo much on the*

(a) Vide, Some exquiſitely beautiful lines in the laſt book of Cowper's Taſk, wherein this ſentiment is introduced.

wiſdom

wiſdom of her rulers, or the ſpirit of her people, as on the perſuaſion that ſhe ſtill contains many, who, in a degenerate age, love and obey the Goſpel of Chriſt; on the humble truſt that the interceſſion of theſe may ſtill be prevalent, that for the ſake of theſe, Heaven may ſtill look upon us with an eye of favour.

Let the prayers of the Chriſtian reader be alſo offered up for the ſucceſs of this feeble endeavour in the ſervice of true Religion. God can give effect to the weakeſt effort; and the writer will feel himſelf too much honoured, if by that which he has now been making, but a ſingle fellow creature ſhould be awakened from a falſe ſecurity, or a ſingle Chriſtian, who deſerves the name, be animated to more extenſive uſefulneſs. He may ſeem to have aſſumed to himſelf a taſk which he was ill qualified to execute. He fears he may be reproached with arrogance and preſumption for taking upon him the office of a teacher. Yet, as he formerly ſuggeſted, it cannot be denied, that it belongs to his public ſituation to inveſtigate the ſtate of the national Religion and morals; and that it is the part of a real patriot to endeavour to retard their decline, and promote their revival. But if the office, in which he has been engaged, were leſs intimately connected with the duties of his particular ſtation, the candid and the liberal mind would not be indiſpoſed to pardon him. Let him be allowed to offer in his excuſe a deſire not only to diſcharge a duty to his country, but to acquit himſelf of what he deems a ſolemn and indiſpenſable obligation to his acquaintance and his friends. Let him allege the unaffected ſolicitude which he feels for the welfare of his fellow creatures. Let him urge the fond wiſh

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he gladly would encourage; that, while, in ſo large a part of Europe, a falſe philoſophy having been preferred before the leſſons of revelation, Infidelity has lifted up her head without ſhame, and walked abroad boldly and in the face of day; while the practical conſequences are ſuch as might be expected, and licentiouſneſs and vice prevail without reſtraint: here at leaſt there might be a ſanctuary, a land of Religion and piety, where the bleſſings of Chriſtianity might be ſtill enjoyed, where the name of the Redeemer might ſtill be honoured; where mankind might be able to ſee what is, in truth, the Religion of Jeſus, and what are its bleſſed effects; and whence, if the mercy of God ſhould ſo ordain it, the means of religious inſtruction and conſolation might be again extended to ſurrounding countries and to the world at large.

FINIS.

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